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The facilitation of mourning : a preventive mental health approach.

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THE FACILITATION OF MOURNING:
A PREVENTIVE MENTAL HEALTH APPROACH

A Dissertation Presented

by

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ABSTRACT

The Facilitation of Mourning:
A Preventive Mental Health Approach

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This study was concerned with creating a curriculum for preschool programs what would help children develop a concept of death and ability to mourn and to address children's concepts and questions on this subject.

There is a societal denial that young children have thoughts and feelings about death. The subject is generally avoided in preschool programs. However, it has been reported in the review of literature that death is a source of curiosity and anxiety for children and that failure to mourn may have detrimental short-term effects on the child such as a constriction of personal growth and the development of learning disabilities. Long-term ramifications of failure to mourn in childhood have been reported to be a propensity for pathological depression and an inability to form intimate relationships. Despite cognitive and emotional limitations, it has been reported that young children can mourn.

This study has demonstrated that it is possible to create a model curriculum for preschool programs that can address the development of the cognitive and emotional abilities of the child to relate to death-related issues and to directly facilitate the child's ability to mourn a loss through the formulation of teaching Objectives in these areas. The components of a curriculum and the process of curriculum development have been described. Two hypothetical classroom death-related situations were created to demonstrate that is possible to utilize selected Objectives on this subject to create Learning Opportunities to address these situations.

A pilot study was reported in which a four-year-old member of a preschool class died. This study showed that it is feasible to apply a curriculum on this subject in a preschool program. The teaching staff designed Learning Opportunities derived from the Objectives formulated in the model curriculum and from information reported in the review of literature. Seventeen Learning Opportunities were reported in the pilot study representing three forms of Learning Opportunities. It was found that children responded to these activities and that their concept and awareness of death was influenced by them. The causes of death were explored, children could differentiate

between separation and death, and death came to be accepted as finite. Personal avoidance and anxiety about the subject declined. Unanticipated observations were also reported such as a lack of overt grief amongst the children, sex-determined modes of resolution of particular death-related concerns, and the formation of subgroups of considerable longevity.

It has been found that a curriculum can be created on the development of a child's understanding of death and ability to mourn and that it can be applied in a preschool program. Due to the limitations of this study, it has been proposed that research be designed and conducted to conclusively demonstrate the viability of this curriculum. Implications of the findings for curriculum on this subject were discussed with reference to the following: teacher training programs, the specific findings in the pilot study and their implications, the short- and long-term effects of directly addressing this subject for children and their families, and the development of curricula on other important subjects.

Educators were encouraged to utilize this curriculum and to use their knowledge of the process of curriculum formulation to develop curricula in other fields with a view to preventive mental health for young children.

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INTRODUCTION

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This author proposes that attempting to understand death and achieving the ability to mourn are essential life tasks which every child must confront and resolve within the normal process of maturation. However, parents and educators usually avoid addressing a child's questions in this area. This is in part attributable to their own avoidance of the subject (Steiner, 1965; McDonald, 1963). Aside from personal motivations to avoid the subject, Henry (1965) has cited general societal beliefs that children do not know what death is and that exposure of a child to the subject may be harmful. The paucity of research on death and mourning as it pertains to young children may be a reflection of these assumptions. A consequence of our societal avoidance of death and lack of research in this field is that neither parents, educators, or psychologists have taken the responsibility of addressing the issues and concerns that death and mourning present for young children.

Learning about death is a task every child must face. Kastenbaum (1959) suggests, "The way a person integrates the prospect of death into his personality while he is still

a child may have great influence on the way he meets the problems of later life" (p. 4). Failure to resolve the issues that death and mourning present is often harmful to a child. Children may develop destructive emotional defenses such as denial of the occurrence and regressive behaviors such as anti-social acting out (Rochlin, 1965; McDonald, 1963). Serious emotional problems in adult life have been attributed to unresolved childhood bereavement (Kliman, 1964). Anna Freud (1943) has found that failure to mourn in early childhood may impair an adult's capacity to form intimate relationships. Clearly, there is a need to effectively facilitate the development of a concept of death and ability to mourn in early childhood.

The Purpose of the Study

It is a basic premise of this author that a preventive mental health approach towards the facilitation of the child's healthy resolution of the conflicts raised by death and mourning is a necessary and legitimate sphere of curriculum development for preschool programs. The purpose of this study is two-fold: 1) to develop a curriculum for preschools on the development of a concept of death and facilitation of mourning, and 2) to demonstrate the feasibility of applying the curriculum in a preschool classroom.

The Rationale of the Study

The issues of death and mourning as they pertain to preschool-age children have been markedly avoided both in terms of theoretical and applied research and in the development of curriculum tools. Preschools, in fact, are now the only area of schooling in which a curriculum designed to meet the child's concerns about death has not been developed. The Center for Death Education and Research has made educational materials, curricula, and bibliographies available to educators for elementary and high-school programs. Leviton and Forman (1974) have designed curricula on this subject for elementary and high schools, colleges, and professional programs in medicine and nursing. Although Leviton and Forman argue for the legitimization of the discussion of death in the classroom and for "death education" to address the developmental concerns of those being exposed to their curricula, these same educators have avoided addressing the needs of preschool children by citing their lack of an awareness of death and their inability to cognitively grow from exposure to the subject. This is congruent with the general societal attitude of avoidance of death and death-related issues. Death is considered to be a taboo subject and has been labeled by some sources as the new pornography (Gorer, 1960). Denial that young children have concerns in this area is common (Feifel, 1974;

Portz, 1964). It is not surprising, then, that preschools have neglected to formulate programs that help children to confront and resolve both general questions and personal issues related to death and mourning.

However, the experiences of death and mourning are a part of the child's everyday life as exemplified in the life and death of animals and plants, and the death of familiar relatives. Young children's awareness of death and differentiated reactions to death-associated words have been documented. Through testing children's galvanic skin response to words in a word association test, Alexander and Alderstein found that young children and early adolescents have a high negative anxiety reaction to death-related words (Alexander & Alderstein, 1958). Recent studies have reported that preschool-age children are emotionally aware and concerned about death and have developed concepts to explain and cope with the phenomenon as it affects their lives (Rochlin, 1965; Furman, 1974; Portz, 1964; Steiner, 1965). However, the specific nature of the child's emotional understanding of death and his/her concepts of death remain unclear due to the varied and often conflicting findings reported.

The ramifications of not helping a child to resolve his/her thoughts and feelings about death can be viewed on several levels. In terms of preventive mental health,

failing to address the inner feelings that death arouses in children and the factual circumstances of death deprives a child of a useful learning experience in terms of the exercising of his/her affective and cognitive coping mechanisms to master a difficult life experience. McDonald (1963) argues that this avoidance inadvertently teaches the child that one can selectively choose the life experiences one will relate to and turn off one's curiosity and emotional responses to unpleasant ones. Aside from the obvious shallowness of this approach, it also contributes to the fear that, indeed, one may be overwhelmed by experience and therefore must avoid it. Gradually this can be generalized to any painful and anxiety-producing experience:

> [The child] . . . becomes afraid not so much of the danger of the world "outside" of his mind as of the danger of experiencing his own unwelcome feelings in his inner world, the mental world of thought and feeling. (McDonald, 1963, p. 19)

Portz's (1964) study of preschool and elementary school children supports an early confrontation and intervention approach to death. His findings showed that

> Children with more experience of death (not sibling or parental death) had more accurate and complete concepts as well as what might be described as a better coming to terms emotionally with the idea of death. (p. 84)

Mourning, as will be reviewed in Chapter II, is a complex process made more difficult for children due to a strong defense of denial, conceptual limitations, and

feelings of guilt. By avoiding death one is denying a child a basic life experience of mourning a loss. It is only by addressing the reality of the loss both cognitively and emotionally that one is given access to the psychological signals to stimulate the mourning process (McDonald, 1963). Kliman (1969) has enumerated the ramifications of not mourning a loss in childhood. He reports that in early childhood there is a predominance of learning difficulties, disinterest in school work, and "disturbances in the field of memory" (p. 5). As the child gets older, there seems to be a higher proportion of antisocial behavior such as juvenile delinquency and stealing than in the general population. In adult life, "there is a tendency for all types of psychiatric illness to be more frequent among [childhood] bereaved people . . . [although] illness tends to cluster in the depressive category" (Kliman, 1969, p. 15). Kliman (1964) reports that amongst a group of 250 adult psychiatric patients hospitalized for acute depression, it was found that they had suffered three to four times the number of unmourned parental deaths as children than a control group of nondepressed patients.

Mourning can be facilitated in childhood. Again, to cite Kliman (1969), "It is rather difficult to treat bereaved people in adult life so that it is even more important to do the preventive work" (p. 14). A teacher's

awareness of the process of mourning and of the particular reactions and behaviors of children in the classroom which indicate what issues they are coping with can help the teacher facilitate the resolution of mourning within the context of a preschool program.

Preschool programs must be designed to take responsibility for the facilitation and resolution of the conflicts and concerns which arise out of the child's awareness of death. Underlining this position is the conviction that one must deal with events as they occur in preschool and that the resolution of life-crises such as death is influenced by the child's interaction with his/her environment. Anna Freud advances this interactional position:

> Whatever level (developmental) has been reached by any given child represents the results of interaction between drive and ego-superego development and their relation to environmental influences, i.e., between maturation, adaptation and structuralization. (Freud, 1965, p. 247)

This implies that the environment, in this case the preschool class, does have a significant role in the child's emotional development. Preschool educators, however, tend to delegate the responsibility for a child's emotional education to the parents who are left largely to their own resources, the occasional advice of pediatricians, and the contradictory and often misleading information of the mass media. Yet the rationale for early intervention in preschools has been clearly spelled out and utilized in the

form of preschools for children with specific handicaps such as blindness (Fraiberg, 1971) and more generalized programs of intervention for children from "culturally deprived" environments such as Headstart programs (Pavenstedt, 1967). The use of the nursery school for therapeutic and diagnostic purposes is by now a commonly accepted procedure (Furman, 1974; Katan, 1969). More recently, Kliman has established a nursery program for children who have experienced severe crises such as the death of a parent or divorce of parents. He argues that these are "high-risk" children in terms of later development of emotional problems and therefore advocates a preventive and therapeutic early intervention approach (Kliman, 1972). Kliman's appreciation of the special needs of children grappling with life-crisis situations is significant. However, it is limited in that these children are separated out from their peers, thereby maintaining the myth that these children are "different" and that the realm of the regular preschool is to work with children who are, presumably, existing without conflicts or an awareness of life-crises.

Having discussed the awareness of death for most children and the need to help a child resolve his/her feelings and thoughts about death and mourning, it is

clear that the preschool environment is a legitimate and needed resource to facilitate this important process.

The Aims of the Study

This study addresses four concerns:

1) What information does a teacher need to have about a child's cognitive and emotional awareness and reactions to death?

2) What is "mourning" for a preschool-aged child, and what behaviors are indicative of the stages of this process as evidenced within the classroom?

3) Using this information, what coping skills--emotional and cognitive--can be identified and developed using classroom situations to help a child build the abilities to address his/her concerns?

4) What can the preschool teacher do to help a child relate to death meaningfully and to facilitate his/her mourning within the context of a classroom death-related experience?

The Plan of the Study

In order to address these concerns, this dissertation is organized in the following way: Chapter I is an introduction to the subject of death and mourning for

preschool-aged children and presents a rationale to explain the need for this study.

Chapter II is a review of the literature. The purpose of this review is two-fold: 1) to provide information on the developmental processes of the child's developing attitudes towards death, and 2) to provide the teacher with what s/he needs to know about how the issues presented by death and mourning may affect a child in a preschool program.

The review of literature is delineated into two areas. First, a review and discussion are presented of the theoretical and research findings on the child's normative, intellectual, and affective awareness of death and the defenses and coping mechanisms used by the child to integrate this awareness. Major sources referred to include Nagy (1948), Rochlin (1965), Maurer (1966), Steiner (1975), Portz (1964), and Kastenbaum (1967). Second, mourning is discussed as a primary task of a child in dealing with a death that affects him/her personally. Sources reviewed on the process of mourning and the specific problems this presents for a young child are A. Freud (1943), Bowlby (1961), and Kliman (1964). Studies by Grollman (1967) and Kliman (1964) on children's behaviors associated with mourning are discussed in relation to helping the teacher to identify observable behaviors one may expect to find in a classroom which would indicate the nature of a child's concerns during mourning.

Chapter III presents a curriculum created by this author on the development of a child's awareness of death and the facilitation of the process of mourning for preschool-aged children. The term curriculum is defined broadly to include the rationale for this particular curriculum, the process of curriculum design, and the application of this process for formulating specific classroom activities in two hypothetical death-related classroom situations.

The design of the curriculum is based generally on the Tyler model in which a theoretical premise underlying a subject is broken down into teachable Objectives (Tyler, 1950). The theoretical foundations of this subject are primarily drawn from the studies of cognitive and affective development reported in the review of literature. For example, Piaget (1959) has stated:

> In questions about plants and animals and the human body, it is those which refer to death which will cause the child to leave behind him the stage of pure finalism (i.e., anthropamorphism) and to acquire the notion of statistical causality of change. (p. 105)

One can infer from this statement that a teaching staff should encourage curiosity about death in relation to plants, animals, and the human body to facilitate the development of the child's understanding of statistical causality or chance. An educator's objective might then be to encourage a child to ask questions about death in

relation to plants, animals, and the human body. Learning Opportunities are then formulated to actualize these Objectives in the classroom. It is expected that by inclusion of the process of curriculum design on a life-crisis such as death and mourning, educators will acquire the tools to create curricula on other relevant subjects.

The curriculum itself has two major goals. The first is to build the intellectual and emotional abilities of preschool children in relation to confronting and resolving concerns about death and the process of mourning. The second is to help children to resolve the conflicts and issues resulting from death-related classroom situations. Teacher and Parent Training Programs are outlined so that they can explore their own attitudes about death and sensitize themselves to the issues this subject may raise for children.

Chapter IV reports a pilot study to illustrate the feasibility of utilizing a curriculum on death for preschool children in a classroom. A four-year-old girl, who had been a member of a preschool in Boston, died of pneumonia. Utilizing many of the Objectives formulated in Chapter III, Learning Opportunities were designed to meet the issues this occurrence raised for the children in the remaining six months of the school year. Careful records of childrens' responses to these activities were made by

the teaching staff. Observation of the children during specific planned activities was recorded by this author behind a one-way mirror. The teaching staff, consulting psychiatrist, and author met routinely to review and analyze the observational data. Selected Learning Opportunities are individually discussed in relation to demonstrating the feasibility of designing and applying Learning Opportunities on this subject.

The limitations of this study are clear. Although the recording of the children's reactions is extensive, the interpretations of their responses are subjective. The small number of children involved (ten), lack of a control group, and the absence of experimental measures are also limitations. Nevertheless, to this author's knowledge, no other study exists in which a curriculum has been designed and applied on this subject in a preschool.

Chapter V summarizes the need and feasibility of creating a curriculum which addresses a child's ideas about death and the process of mourning. Tentative conclusions based on the pilot study are discussed in relation to further research on: 1) theoretical aspects of a child's understanding of death and ability to mourn; 2) development of more effective curriculum strategies to meet a child's needs in death-related situations; and 3) feasibility of

creating curricula to address other life-crises issues and developmental tasks for preschool programs.

Summary

Due to an avoidance of the subject of death in our society and a general denial that children have thoughts and feelings about death, the subject is usually avoided by both parents and educators of preschool children. This author has reviewed findings that young children are aware of death and have ideas and feelings associated to it. Failure to mourn a death has been shown to have detrimental short- and long-term effects on children. It is the purpose of this study to create a curriculum designed to address the issues and concerns death and mourning raise for preschool children and to demonstrate, through a pilot study, that it is feasible to apply the curriculum in a preschool program. It is expected that observations derived from the pilot study will indicate areas of research for further theoretical insights and practical curriculum suggestions in the area of death and mourning for young children. Implications for further work in the area of curriculum design on preventive mental health issues will also be discussed.

C H A P T E R I I

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this review is to provide the information necessary for the foundation of the development of a curriculum designed to help a child develop the capacity to cope with and grow by realistically confronting the issues that death and mourning raise.

The following is a discussion of the theoretical and research findings concerning the child's awareness and conceptualization of death and attendant defenses and abilities to cope with and master death-related issues. The second part of the review is a discussion of the nature and process of mourning for young children. Common reactions of children while mourning are explained and identified as indicators of the nature of the child's concerns during the mourning process.

There is no universally acknowledged concept of death. How one ultimately views death seems to reflect one's own personal life experience as a member of a particular religion, time, and culture (Diskin & Guggenheim, 1967).

> Anthropologists are aware of the striking variation in definitions of death that exist in different cultures. . . . We are accustomed to think of death as that state that occurs after the normal body functions cease. As we use the term, the transition from life to death occurs in an instant. . . . [However], among the Kota

> of Southern India, death is seen as a process which can take as long as two years. . . . The wide variety of defining death reflects the variety of ways of looking at the universe. (Disken & Guggenheim, 1967, pp. 12-14)

Disken and Guggenheim perceive American society as so diverse in terms of religious, ethnic, and racial sub-cultures that a societal consensus on the meaning of death or its definition is highly unlikely.

Kastenbaum (1967) reports that, from a psychological viewpoint, a developmentalist approach towards a child's concept of death is handicapped:

> In certain areas of psychological development we will encounter even greater difficulties because we lack a truly convincing idea of the "goal" or "maturational outcome," what the process of growth is moving toward. Such is the case with the concept of death. (p. 90)

Establishing developmental norms of how children view death must therefore be limited to a general movement towards an understanding of death since no commonly established goal of its ultimate meaning is acknowledged in our society.

Another factor affecting our understanding of a child's development of a concept of death is the reluctance of adults to transmit information and their feelings about death to young children (Steiner, 1965). A consequence of our cultural avoidance of the subject is that a child's ideas about death are largely uninfluenced by adults except by the implications conveyed by their avoidance, and the

messages received about death through the mass media (Henry, 1965; Kastenbaum, 1967).

These factors have made it difficult to conduct normative studies on how a child views death and may account for the lack of research available in this area. Nevertheless, a few studies have sought to establish normative stages of a child's thoughts about death and the properties ascribed to it. Nagy's (1948) work provides one of the most authoritative studies in this area. She asked 378 children between the ages of three and ten in Budapest to talk about or draw their feelings and thoughts about death. She found that there were three stages in the development of the meaning of death for these children.

The first stage is usually found in children between the ages of three and five. Death is thought to be reversible. The finality of death is strongly denied. Death is described as a long journey or deep sleep in which dead people are able to think and feel. These findings are corroborated and elaborated by Rochlin (1965) who found that children of this age deny the possibility of their own death and attribute causes of death to the outcome of certain relationships between people, for example, hostility and defiance of authority.

In the second stage, between the ages of five and nine, the child tends to personify death. One child reported:

"Only those die whom the death man catches and carries off. Whoever can get away does not die." Although the finality of death is accepted, it is seen as occurring to bad people and due to external causes. Kastenbaum (1967) describes children in this stage as having a "matter-of-fact" attitude towards death based on the assumption that death is accidental and therefore avoidable. The child is eager to categorize the phenomena which cause death and thereby avoid it.

> The child often is prone to misinterpret superficial or even irrelevant signals as being intrinsically involved in death . . . he seeks to isolate those phenomena which "mean" or "cause" death. Did somebody die in a hospital? Then one must stay away from hospitals, because being-in-a-hospital equals death. (Kastenbaum, 1967, p. 101)

Nagy found that children between the ages of seven and ten enter a third stage. These children accept death as final and an inevitable universal fact. Death is seen as a cessation of bodily activity. One child described it as "Death is like the withering of flowers . . ." (p. 24). Another child simply stated: "Death is something that no one can escape" (p. 24). The child at this age reaches an understanding of the concept of death in naturalistic terms. Kastenbaum (1967) attributes this transition to a growth in the child's intellectual ability to abstract and to his/her emotional security to relate death to one-self.

Melear (1972) replicated Nagy's research to establish a contemporary normative assessment of the development of the child's concept of death. He interviewed forty-one children between the ages of three and twelve in the Denver, Colorado area. He utilized a flexible interview technique to elicit children's thoughts and feelings about death. His findings reveal the same three stages as originally described by Nagy in terms of the child's understanding of death and attributes ascribed to it. However, he states: "There are no clear chronological age limits to the categories. . . . Among those that thought that everyone dies [stage three according to Nagy] were the youngest" (p. 48). Melear hypothesizes that intellectual ability as opposed to chronological age may be a significant factor in the development of a child's concept of death. He suggests that

> A study attempting to correlate subjects' mental age or IQ scores with their conceptions of death would be valuable in establishing whether the stages are developmental and depend on levels of intellectual maturity. (p. 68).

In summary, two normative studies have reported that there is a general progression in a child's conceptualization of death which can be identified by three stages of development. Children first seem to deny the finality of death. It is viewed as reversible and as a temporary departure. Dead people are capable of thinking and feeling.

As children develop, they tend to personify death. Although the finiteness of death is accepted, it is perceived as avoidable and as something that occurs to bad people. Children eventually perceive death as a universal fact. Death is inevitable and will happen to oneself. Although attributes about death in these stages and the stages' sequence appear to be consistent, it has been suggested by Melear (1972) that factors other than chronological age may determine the child's stage of conceptualization of death.

The delineation of normative stages and the constellation of attributes a child ascribes to death at each stage are important information for the educator. Kastenbaum (1967) states: ". . . if we can appreciate and respect the child's view of reality . . . then we are in a position to foster his development through life with the beginnings of an enlightened orientation toward death" (pp. 107-08). Once the stage of a child's thoughts about death is identified, it is possible to design Learning Opportunities to help the child clarify and cope with his/her ideas on this subject and progress towards a more mature comprehension of death. Researchers (Nagy, 1948; Rochlin, 1965; and Melear, 1972) have found that preschool-aged children view death as reversible. An educator, aware of this, can take advantage of an incident such as the death

of a class pet to help children to distinguish between alive and dead and to understand the finality of death. Kastenbaum (1967) points to another area in which information derived from normative studies is useful. He states: "How far has a child at a certain age advanced toward a mature concept of death? . . . [and] how can we determine when he needs our help? (p. 90). Normative studies provide the standards by which the educator can identify a lack of development and facilitate growth by designing appropriate curriculum activities.

Studies of cognition conducted by Kastenbaum (1967), Piaget (1924), and Steiner (1965), and the psychological studies of Maurer (1974), Rochlin (1965), and Portz (1964), often confirm aspects of the normative stages in their findings. However, their emphasis is on the reasons why children think and feel about death as they do.

Piaget (1924) has extensively investigated the development of a child's conceptual abilities. He describes the mental abilities available to the four-and-five-year-old child as preoperational. Children of this age organize information by fusing it together rather than by establishing cause and effect relationships. Ideas do not build into larger conceptualizations but exist side by side. The child's intellectual vision is limited to the particular instance. What s/he sees is reality. Conceptual operations

are thought to be unavailable to the child until s/he is close to puberty. According to Piaget's conceptual theory, animism (the attribution of human characteristics to non-human objects) is one of the dominant frameworks through which the child conceptualizes his/her experiences. He, therefore, believes that the child of four or five is incapable of distinguishing live from dead. However, Piaget (1959) suggests that one should encourage young children to ask questions about death to facilitate the development of concepts of causality and change.

Kastenbaum (1957) also reports that the preschool-aged child cannot comprehend death: "It is necessary to appreciate how strongly the child's concept of death is dependent upon the total pattern of mental processes and resources available to him at a particular stage in his development" (p. 93). Kastenbaum suggests that the concept of death is extremely complex and that for the child to comprehend death s/he would have to acquire certain mental operations. He lists these as ". . . self-awareness, logical thought operations, conceptions of probability, necessity, and causation, of personal and physical time, of finality and separation" (p. 94). He argues that the child under seven does not have the intellectual tools to develop these concepts and maintains that separation is the one concept

available to the preschool-aged child for the development of a concept of death.

Steiner (1965), to this author's knowledge, has conducted the only experimental research on the thought processes of children in relation to death. She questioned sixty children, twenty in each of three groups (4-5, 7-8, 11-12) utilizing a structured interview. Predetermined questions were asked about objects and pictures to elicit children's processes of thinking about death. She found that, for the most part, preschool children's concepts of death reflect Piaget's theory of conceptual development for children of this age. Steiner reports, "in the preschool child, pre-logical thought predominated, with egocentrism strongly influencing his thinking" (p. 49). As an example, Steiner reports that when a child was asked if a candle were alive, a typical response was: ". . . alive because we use candles for company" (p. 37). Reversibility of death was reported by two-thirds of the preschool subjects (p. 71). For instance, when asked if a leaf (placed on a table in front of the child) was alive or dead a child replied: "Dead . . . when the wind blows, it makes it alive" (p. 36). Steiner reports that when asked the same question while discussing the death of a person a common response was: "Maybe [he] will come back to talk" (p. 74). Attributes of life were often ascribed to the dead. Steiner

finds that "while the young child does not readily admit to conscious concern with death, there is awareness of the existence of the phenomenon, which arouses strong feelings of anxiety" (p. 82). She speculates that the theory of reversibility of death is evidence of that anxiety and accounts for this by referring to the child's egocentric thought process. ". . . since egocentric thinking is characteristic of the child at this age, any threat to the primacy of the ego would cause the child great concern" (p. 82). Denial of thoughts about death is common although her subjects do admit to play and dreams about death. Violence is seen as the primary cause of death although it is also viewed as an "instrument of reward and punishment" (p. 49).

It is interesting to note that one-third of Steiner's preschool subjects did say that they thought death is final, and this was about the same for her middle-aged (7-8) group (p. 72). Steiner found that these preschool children have the ability to categorize alive and dead objects.

> This ability to use concrete thought at an early age, although limited, could be used by a teacher to help children toward clear conceptions about these phenomena by focusing on the perceptible elements which are within children's concrete experiences. (pp. 104-05)

In discussing the limitations of her highly verbal and intellectual approach with young children, Steiner does point out an unexpected finding which has relevance to

curriculum development. She reports that an apparent consequence of asking direct questions about death is that children seem to clarify their ideas on the subject (p. 97). She also suggests the need for a more precise and simplified vocabulary to help children differentiate between live, dead, and inanimate objects. Steiner states that "it would be useful to introduce content in an early grade about the characteristics of inanimate, dead and living phenomena, as they pertain to plants, animals, and humans" (p. 105).

Studies of cognition indicate that the preschool child's conceptual abilities are preoperational. They are limited be egocentric, animistic, and pre-logical thought processes. Inductive or deductive reasoning, abstract thinking, and understanding the relation between cause and effect are generally considered unavailable to the child of this age (Piaget, 1924; Steiner, 1965). Kastenbaum (1967) reports that a lack of both self-awareness and a concept of personal and physical time are further limitations. For the purposes of this dissertation, the information reported by these studies delineate and label cognitive abilities and indicate what cognitive operations the educator can foster in the child to facilitate progress to a fuller understanding of death. The child's capacity for cognitive development is supported by Piaget (1959) who suggests the importance of children's questioning and

learning about death as a means of developing more logical conceptual abilities. Kastenbaum (1967) states:

> With the first apprehension that death is something formidable, the child attempts to gain control through what for him is a rational analysis of the situation. So it is that one of the first testing grounds of the child's reasoning abilities is the problem of death. (p. 101)

Steiner (1965) specifically encourages schools to stimulate discussion of death and to develop a vocabulary on this subject to make it more comprehensible to young children.

However, taking only these sources into consideration, they lead one to conclude that death is an abstraction that the child is unable to comprehend due to his/her cognitive limitations. To quote Melear (1972), "a child below a certain level of [intellectual] maturity . . . is unable to grasp the abstract meaning of death" (p. 66).

The problem with this position most pertinent to this study is that it does not take into account the fact that both Steiner (1965) and Melear (1972) found that one-third of their youngest subjects did have concepts of death including the finality and universality of death. Furthermore, these sources report a considerable overlapping among children of all ages in relation to the child's stage of conceptualization of death. Clearly, one's chronological age or intellectual ability alone cannot account for these inconsistencies. Also, in attempting to negate the child's

ability to comprehend death, one is left with the need to account for the high level of anxiety and denial reported by Steiner (1965) and Portz (1964). A broader theoretical foundation is needed to address the issues raised by the limitations of research on children's cognitive capacities as they relate to his/her understanding of death.

Studies from the psychoanalytic tradition have attempted to address this issue by suggesting that although children may not possess the mental operations required to conceptualize death, it is possible that they have a growing awareness of death gained through early experiences of non-being, loss, and separation. Maurer (1966) proposes that there is a preconceptual awareness of being and nonbeing. She suggests that the night terrors that children experience as early as three months old are an example of this:

> When the infant, whose hold on consciousness is somewhat tenuous, wakens in the dark of a quite house, deprived of signals from two senses and perhaps more, he is gripped by this sensation of disembodiment and lets go with the unearthly shriek that doctors call "night terrors." Since this distress yields readily to the sight, sound, smell and feel of the familiar parent, without food or other care, the origin is surely in the brain rather than in some other part of the body. (p. 35)

The exploration of being-nonbeing, loss and separation, develops through the three-month-old's peek-a-boo games (note from Maurer: "Etymologically, peek-a-boo stems from Old English words meaning 'Alive or Dead?'" [Partridge,

1925]) to the high chair games of dropping objects and the child's joy at their reappearance. The one-year-old's preoccupation with the words "all gone" has significance for Maurer. She suggests that the child is acknowledging that all things do not return. Maurer reports that by two the child

> . . . attempts mastery of his fears of disappearance in another way. He learns to project "all gone" and to produce it at will. Eagerly and without a trace of guilt, the growing baby commits symbolic murder in psychological self defense. Offer a two-year-old a lighted match and watch his face light up with demonic glee as he blows it out. (p. 37)

The child by three is prone to ask questions about death. Children, who feel themselves surrounded by unknown dangers, use their burgeoning brain to ask which elements are beneficient, which are neutral, and which are lethal (p. 37). Maurer (1974) describes a child asking his grandmother how old she is and why she was going to die soon. She writes: "This is not a 'death wish.' He doesn't want grandma to die. He wants to know, 'What is the life span of the human? How long will I live?'" (p. 14). The motivations attributed to these behaviors have not been thoroughly researched. However, Maurer (1966) suggests that these early experiences of one's own nonbeing and the loss of people and objects necessary to the child's survival may be thought to provide the experiential foundations for later conceptions of death. Kliman (1964) concurs with Maurer that the young child has a

preconceptual awareness of death. He suggests that by four years of age, the child also has a conception of death as permanent and finite. He states: "They can represent it graphically and understand it in a sensori-motor fashion although they can't express it in an active verbal way" (p. 3).

This author suggests that the possibility of a pre-conceptual awareness of death may account for the anxiety and denial about death found in young children of this age. The following is a discussion of what the child's ideas about death may mean to him/her and the mechanisms the child employs to cope with thoughts about death.

"Death is a matter of deep consideration to the very young child . . . and his thoughts of dying are commonplace" (Rochlin, 1967, p. 60). The awareness of death is thought to be experienced by the child on two levels: the awareness of one's own mortality and the awareness of the possibility of the death of one's parents (Rochlin, 1965; Maurer, 1966). Rochlin writes that there is an

> . . . inevitable realization that the end of his existence as well as the existence of those who care for him . . . occurs. These somber actualities weigh heavily enough to have a compelling emotional effect. (1967, p. 52)

This awareness, however limited conceptually, is a source of disquiet about reality. Rochlin reports that this is because death is experienced as a narcissistic injury on

a personal level, i.e., self-reference. The child faces his/her own limitations, helplessness, and dependence on parents for survival. This awareness reignites the basic fear of abandonment and isolation first experienced in early separation anxiety (Maurer, 1966). Maurer states: "Fundamentally, separation anxiety is fear of death. Children would die if no one took care of them, and they know it, worry about it" (1964, p. 15). Maurer further clarifies the relationship between the child's fears of separation and fear of death. She writes:

> Separation anxiety, often treated as though it were the deepest level in childhood dynamics, can be more fully understood if we keep in mind that physiologically the child is totally dependent upon the nurturing, protecting parents, and it is thus that the child experiences them (Murphy, 1962). At some level below true cognition, the child with naive narcissism "knows" that the loss of his parents is the loss of his tie to life. Left alone or with strangers or in a strange place, he feels abandoned without hope of rescue. Total terror for his life rather than jealous possessiveness of a chosen and lost love object [loved person] is the aetiology of the somatic distress of separation anxiety. (1966, p. 36)

Death and separation are separate yet closely linked phenomena. The anxiety they evoke is attributed to the child's drive to survive. The child therefore defends him/herself against an awareness of death. Rochlin (1965) suggests that the function of defenses ". . . is to provide some security against the constant uncertainty, threat, or liability that the loss of a personally important object

[person] . . . represents" (p. 59). According to Rochlin (1967), the defenses the child does develop determine how s/he views death. ". . . a child's views of dying and death are inseparable from the psychological defenses against the reality of death" (p. 63). For example, in defense against facing one's own death and the death of one's parents, Rochlin suggests that the child develops the idea of restitution--death as reversible and s/he invests chosen people such as one's parents with magical powers to create a defense of omnipotence and invulnerability against a sense of helplessness (pp. 65-67). This primitive development of the use of magical thinking to create defenses against facing one's limitation of mortality and sense of helplessness is never entirely given up. Adults will fall back on primitive thinking when involved in this kind of stressful situation (Kubler-Ross, 1969). "When narcissism is menaced, reason seems to have little effect; it is the world of magic that is relied upon" (Rochlin, 1967, p. 71).

Another example of the relationship between how a child views death and the development of psychological defenses is seen in how children cope with the knowledge that being dead means giving up "alive" functions and processes. Rochlin reports that a defense of denial is

applied to this information so that many children report that one's functions are aggrandized when dead. He writes:

> If we recognize that seeing is an especially important function to a particular child, being dead comes to mean not to see, yet the dead to such a child are conceived as seeing again. They watch over and observe. Rather than having limits to their vision as they do during life, the dead acquire infinite powers of observation. (1967, p. 53)

In summary, research derived from psychoanalytic studies stress that children have a preconceptual awareness of death (Maurer, 1966). Very young children are thought to possess concepts of death including that of their own mortality and of their parents' and that death is finite. Rochlin (1965) suggests that children's expressed views on this subject reflect an unconscious need to defend themselves from their awareness of the reality of death.

There is no literature which integrates the cognitive and psychoanalytic schools of thought on the child's concept of death. This author proposes that there is an integration of the findings reported which occurs as follows. It has been reported by Rochlin (1967) and Maurer (1966) that a young child has an awareness of his own mortality and the properties attributed to death and that this awareness evokes anxieties due to a sensing of one's own mortality, helplessness, and dependence on parents. This author hypothesizes that the anxieties evoked in children by death are especially strong due to an apparent lack of conceptual

development as reported by Piaget (1959), Steiner (1965), and Kastenbaum (1967). A short separation from a parent, therefore, is experienced as a strong emotional event due to the child's lack of a developed concept of time. Another hypothesis is that there is also an interaction of the child's awareness of death, emotional anxieties, and conceptual limitations that lead to the creation of particular defenses which serve to ameliorate these anxieties and directly reflect the mental operations of the young child. For example, the child perceives the world egocentrically (Piaget, 1959). S/He experiences his/her own death as a severe limitation of the self and does not want to face his/her own mortality (Rochlin, 1967). S/He also has little concept of causality and finite time (Piaget, 1959). This author proposes that conceptualizing death as reversible reflects both the emotional needs and cognitive operational abilities of the child. Their dynamic interaction plays a large part in the development of a child's concept of death and ability to mourn and strongly suggests the need for curriculum to build both cognitive and emotional skills so that the child can tolerate and confront death-related issues.

The following discussion on mourning delineates basic steps in the process of mourning for young children, specific obstacles the preschool child may encounter and

a description of observable behaviors that can be identified while a child is coping with a death.

Mourning is the primary task of any human being in dealing with a loved one's death. The purpose of mourning is to allow oneself to experience the loss fully and thereby liberate emotional energy so that one can form new close relationships. Kliman (1974) states:

> By mourning, I mean the process defined by Freud. It involves gradually facing and accepting the reality of death, remembering a substantial quantity of experiences and affective relations connected with the deceased object [Ed. note: "object" in psychoanalytic terms, refers to a person], discharging grief and related affects and developing a replacement relationship. (p. 3)

Anna Freud (1943), in observing the reactions of children to the death of people close to them during World War II, emphasizes the importance of mourning for children. She lists the effects of an incomplete resolution as: 1) the child will remain attached to the fantasy of the dead person; 2) the child will invest his/her love in things or work; or 3) the child will be frightened to love anyone but him/herself. If the child has fully accepted the loss, however, s/he will be able to find another real person to love. Kliman (1964) has pointed out similar effects and writes: "The parent abandoning the child through death makes it very difficult for the grown child to trust anybody else in a really deep way" (p. 14). Mourning, therefore, is an

important emotional task in helping the child to eventually be able to form new attachments.

Appropriate mourning involves other important emotional issues for the child. Kliman (1969) reports that mourning is followed by a general release of intellectual and emotional involvement with the deceased which prevents a constriction of the child's personality. He reports that there is a freeing of emotional energy for the child's further development. The child is able "to devote his energies more directly to the demands of his environment" (p. 9). Kliman's findings also suggest that there is ". . . an improved ability to conceptualize verbally and to deal more meaningfully with social interactions" (p. 9). The pathological results of failure to mourn in childhood have been reported in Chapter I. Briefly stated, it was found that, "especially when bereavement occurs during early childhood, there is an excessive incidence of psychopathology within a few months, and it endures noticeably throughout adult life" (Kliman, 1969, p. 3). Clearly, mourning is an essential experience for a bereaved child.

Unfortunately, mourning is complicated and often not adequately resolved by young children due to conceptual limitations and emotional defenses against facing death. Further problems associated with the child's ability to mourn have been cited by Rochlin (1965). He writes:

"Another significant difference between the young child and the adult which may be commonly observed, but neglected as a subject of study, is the rapidity with which regression and fixation takes place in the young" (p. 49). Fixation, in relation to mourning, refers to a developmental arrest of the child's ego development and to the issues presented by the psychosexual stage in which the death occurred. Kliman (1969) concurs that a common reaction of the child to a death is a ". . . fixation to the psychosexual stage in which the loss occurs" (p. 3). Rochlin (1965) reports:

> Obviously, the explanation lies in the disparity of their emotional development, which specifically means that the child's superego, unlike the adult's, is not yet a developed function, nor at this time are the ego defenses set as they will be later. Therefore, when a child experiences a loss, the effect is very different from the effect on an adult of the loss of a loved person. (p. 49)

Kliman (1964) also discusses obstacles for mourning in childhood. He states:

> I believe the child is handicapped because of his developmental lack, because of his immaturity. He cannot tolerate the emotion of sadness. He cannot be specifically preoccupied with memory of the dead parent. He can't think it through, he can't remember in order to forget. (p. 5)

For all these reasons, the process of mourning in childhood has similarities to that of an adult, yet it must also reflect the special needs and abilities of children. In recent years, there have been some reports on individual case studies of the psychoanalysis of bereaved children

(Kliman, 1969; Rochlin, 1975; Furman, 1974; Feinberg, 1969). However, to this author's knowledge, Bowlby (1969) is one of the only authors who has systematically attempted to study whether there is, in fact, a progression or process of mourning that children experience. He has identified three natural phases of grieving which he feels the child goes through. Although these phases overlap and repeat themselves depending on the individual needs of a child, he reports that they form a natural progression within the mourning process.

The first phase is one of "protest" where the child attempts to deny that a person is dead and feels s/he can regain the person by reproaching it for desertion. Of this stage, Furman (1974) cites the need of adults to help the child test the reality of the death and thereby come to acknowledge it. Kliman (1964) suggests that this can be accomplished by allowing the child to fully participate with his/her family so that s/he is exposed to examples of expressions of grief. He feels that the reality of the death is strengthened by the child's attendance at the funeral and by watching the burial.

The second phase is characterized by "pain, despair, and disorganization" as the child comes to accept the fact of the death. Regression is common at this stage. "Regression occurs while the child is passing through the

no-man's land of affection, i.e., during the time the old object has been given up and before the new one has been found" (Freud & Bulingham, 1943, p. 85). Rochlin (1965) concurs with this observation and reports another temporary phenomenon: ". . . in some instances even an arrest of certain ego functions, particularly in respect to object relations, has been demonstrated" (pp. 57-58). During these first two phases, Bowlby (1969) states: ". . . feelings are ambivalent while mood and action vary from an immediate expectancy expressed in an angry demand for the object's return to a despair expressed in subdued pining--or even not expressed at all" (p. 483). Reviewing memories is encouraged at this stage though the child will often do this through activity as opposed to verbal expression (Furman, 1974). Kliman (1969) reports that due to the child's inability to repress, s/he can easily be overwhelmed by affect when exploring his/her feelings and thoughts about the dead person. He suggests preliminary immunizing discussions involving previous deaths of animals and known people so that effects associated with the loss can be experienced in small doses. As the guilt, anger, and sadness are faced and expressed, he suggests that the child is more liberated to relate to his/her environment and people. Kliman states: "Unless this can be done thoroughly, intensely, it is probable that the love object will remain

all too active in the mental workings of the bereaved child" (1969, p. 5).

The third phase identified by Bowlby is described as "hope." The child begins to organize its life without the lost person. The experience of loss in childhood is often accompanied by an incomplete mourning where the child has not been able to express the ambivalence involved in loss. This results in a premature detachment from the loved person and a repression of these unresolved feelings which later tend to distort and influence feelings and behavior. Furman (1974) states that the greatest interferences in mourning are the defense mechanisms already established before the death. Kliman (1974) suggests that in helping the surviving adults to go through the full mourning process, one is giving the child a model and necessary support for the child him/herself to mourn.

Other variables derived from psychoanalytic theory are thought to influence the child's ability to mourn. Three will be described. First, it is thought to be essential that a child reach the stage of "object constancy" (i.e., an internalized representation of the loved person) before s/he can mourn. This is thought to occur before the end of a child's first year. By the time a child is two years old, it is generally considered that s/he can mourn a loss because s/he can appreciate what the loss means and can

give up the dead person (Furman, 1974). A second problem is found in the ambivalent sadistic stage of child development. The three-year-old child is thought to be often too bound up in aggression towards a parent to experience the sadness the loss has incurred (Rochlin, 1955). A third problem occurs when death results from a violent act that the child observes while dealing personally with castration anxieties. A boy at this time is thought to be concerned with the possible loss of his penis. In witnessing a death involving bodily mutilation and violence, the child may relate this to his own fears. It is expected that an increase in castration anxiety results. Rochlin (1965) states: "If the object loss occurs during the phallic period of when the castration complex is at its height, these phases are correspondingly prolonged" (p. 58). This author feels that considering the effect of death in relation to the child's psychosocial and psychosexual development can be useful in providing insights to the particular nature of a child's concerns.

The following is a description of what Grollman (1967) has observed to be common reactions of children to death. These do not occur in a predictable progression in relation to the process of mourning as delineated by Bowlby (1969) and are not necessarily experienced by every child. However, observation of these reactions in a child may help

the educator to identify 1) what phase of mourning the child is in, and 2) what underlying concerns are indicated by the child's behavior. One is then in a position to address and facilitate the resolution of the child's inner conflicts and concerns.

Grollman (1969) reports that guilt is strongly felt by most children. Although guilt plays a role in most people's experience of mourning, with children the problem is compounded. Magical thinking influences them so that a child may state: "I wished he'd hurt himself and he did, so I must have caused it." Grollman suggests that reality concepts are not fully developed in the young child so that experiences such as the following are typical: "You must eat to live--since I did not eat, she died" (p. 22). Another experience which Grollman feels compounds a guilt reaction is that it is common for the child to be punished for unacceptable behavior. In the case of death, the child often experiences this as a punishment for a wrong-doing and feels responsible for the death. Behaviors which indicate a child's guilt vary though generally they can be characterized as despondence, forgetfulness, and aggression (Grollman, 1969, p. 22).

Other common reactions cited by Grollman are: 1) "denial"--this is experienced by the child as a means

of defending oneself against the loss in an attempt to deny that it happened. Grollman states:

> The adult may even feel that the youngster's apparent unconcern is heartless. Or the parent may be relieved and feel, "Isn't it lucky! I'm sure he misses his father, but he does not seem to be really bothered by it! Usually, this signifies that the child has found the loss too great to accept, and goes on pretending secretly that the person is still alive. This is why it is so necessary to help the child accept reality (p. 18);

2) "hostile reactions to the deceased" occur when the child feels abandoned and is angry at the dead person for deserting the child. It is also attributable at times to the child's attempt to recover the lost person--a sort of scolding so that the person won't leave again (p. 19); 3) "hostile reactions to others"--in this instance, a child may be expressing a projection of his/her own guilt or an anger than the persons remaining alive are not the deceased person (p. 20); 4) idealization occurs when the child maintains an idealized fantasy of the deceased and does not deal with ambivalent or negative feelings (p. 20); 5) "assumption of mannerisms of the deceased"--this refers to the child's attempt to either carry out the wishes of the dead or assume that person's role in the family (p. 20); 6) "replacement" is seen when the child seeks out other people to form attachments with (p. 20); 7) "anxiety" is observable when the child identifies with the symptoms of the dead person. Grollman states: "The child becomes

preoccupied with the physical symptoms that terminated the life of the father" (p. 20). As an example, he quotes a child: "I feel like Daddy when he died. I have a pain in my chest" (p. 20); and 8) "panic"--Grollman suggests that this is felt generally. Concerns of the child range from who will take care of the child to who will make the money to buy food (p. 21).

These overt behaviors can be seen as indices reflecting a child's inner reactions to death. They are considered to be common, natural reactions. Some indications that a child is becoming troubled due to a death are a prolongation or exaggeration of the above reactions, signs of early detachment and repression, and an inability to make new and meaningful relationships (Grollman, 1967). Rochlin (1965) suggests that another indication of failure to mourn is seen when a child turns to inanimate objects to replace his/her loss.

In summary, mourning is a fundamental task for the child in relation to later abilities to form new close attachments to people and in releasing the energy needed to continue emotional and intellectual development. However, mourning is difficult for children due to their conceptual limitations, emotional defenses against facing death, and limited psychological development. Regression or fixation at the developmental stage in which the death

occurs are common phenomena which prevents grieving. Bowlby reports that there is a general process of mourning in childhood.. The three phases of this process are: "protest," "pain despair and disorganization," and "hope." The process of mourning may be further complicated for the child by the psychosocial and psychosexual stage at which the death occurs. The emotional availability and support of family members or significant adults is probably instrumental to the child's successful resolution of the mourning process. Grollman has observed several common behaviors and reactions that children have while experiencing a death. It is suggested that the reactions a child exhibits can give educators insights to the inner conflicts the child is experiencing and can, therefore, serve as useful indices in helping a child with his/her concerns.

Reviewing the underlying cognitive and emotional issues which contribute to a child's understanding of death and ability to mourn should help to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics which are working within the child when confronted with life-situations such as separation from parents in the classroom or the death of a class pet. These situations can then be met with a greater sensitivity to the issues underlying a situation and the defenses and behaviors a child is using to cope with them. Activities can therefore be designed which reflect this awareness.

Furman (1974) explicitly states that children need education in reorganizing, tolerating and expressing their feelings associated with death and mourning. They need experience in tolerating separations while learning to identify and express both the sadness and anger separation engenders (McDonald, 1963). They also need to achieve the ability to differentiate themselves from dead objects which entails an awareness of the concrete manifestations of death as understood from animals and plants (Piaget, 1959). Children also need to differentiate between separation and death and must learn to master the mourning process. This author proposes that Learning Opportunities derived from the resources discussed in this review of literature can be created within the classroom to help children to develop the cognitive and emotional skills necessary to face, as opposed to avoid, the anxieties and conflicts presented by death.

C H A P T E R I I I

CURRICULUM ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRESCHOOL CHILD'S UNDERSTANDING OF DEATH AND ABILITY TO MOURN

> [On the child's exploration of death]: . . . how can his fears be relieved, his sense of important aliveness be increased, his curiosity about life and death satisfied and redirected into constructive channels?
>
> Adah Maurer, 1966, p. 37

This chapter is a presentation of a curriculum this author has developed on the development of a concept of death and the facilitation of mourning for preschool children. It is designed both as a preventive mental health measure to build the skills necessary to cope with death-related occurrences, and to help a child resolve the conflicts and issues death and mourning raise directly. It has been postulated that through a knowledgeable and responsive approach, young children can benefit from the opportunity to exercise their abilities to cope with this anxiety-arousing subject and grow from the experience in terms of a deeper understanding of the meaning of life and death.

Organization of this chapter is designed to present the process of curriculum formulation on this subject as well as some specific Learning Opportunities designed for classroom use. This dissertation emphasizes the development of

Objectives on the various aspects of death and mourning. It does not focus on a presentation of various curriculum activities. This decision is based on the premise that it is the Objectives that Learning Opportunities are designed to actualize. Any variety of Learning Opportunities can be designed to meet a particular Objective depending on the creativity of the teaching staff and the particular circumstances of a classroom situation.

The rationale presents the definition and relationship of the various components underlying the formulation of Learning Opportunities. Each step has been outlined with the expectation that once the process of curriculum design on death and mourning is understood, educators will be encouraged to create activities to meet their particular classroom needs.

The rationale is followed by the formulation of Objectives on selected cognitive and psychological aspects of this subject. This process starts with the selection of Generalizations which are statements on the development of a concept and awareness of death and facilitation of mourning derived primarily from sources in the review of literature. The Generalizations in this chapter have been chosen to reflect the various areas of this subject to exemplify how each area can be utilized to formulate Objectives. Once this process is made known to educators,

they can select Generalizations and arrive at Objectives appropriate for their classroom needs. Inferences about what the teachers and school program should do are then created. They reflect an integration of this author's values and the material generated from the Generalizations. Objectives are created from the Inferences and underlie the design of Learning Opportunities.

Two hypothetical classroom situations have been created to illustrate the application of this process to the formulation of Learning Opportunities.

Suggestions are included for a Teacher Training Program and a Parent Education Program in which both teachers and parents are encouraged to explore their own feelings about death and share information about children's perceptions and responses to this subject. The teaching staff and parents are considered to be essential contributors in the formulation of Inferences in a class program.

Curriculum Rationale

This rationale addresses itself to four criteria of curriculum design derived from Tyler's model (Tyler, 1950):

1) What educational purposes should the school seek to serve?

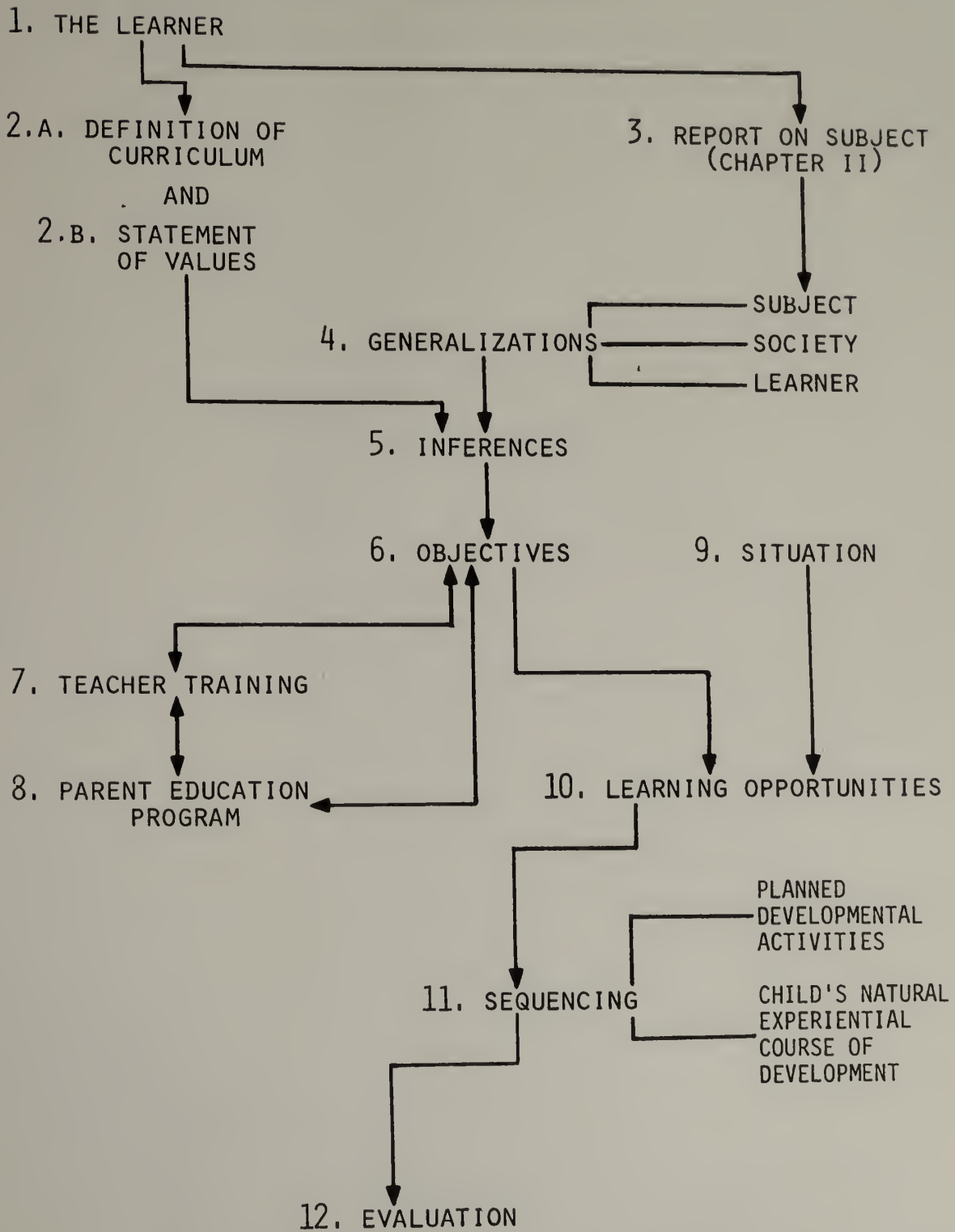
2) How can Objectives be effectively formulated to effect these purposes?

3) What Learning Opportunities can be provided that are likely to effect these purposes?

4) How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained?

The following rationale represents the definition and organization of the various components of this curriculum. The chart on the following page labels and numbers these components. Numbers are ascribed progressively to delineate the relationship among these components in terms of the process of curriculum development. The rationale begins by defining the "Learner" (preschool children) for whom this curriculum is designed. This author's Definition of Curriculum (2.A.) and Statement of Values (2.B.) which underlie the curriculum are then discussed. Together, they provide the rationale for the presentation of the process of curriculum formulation. Information from the review of literature in Chapter II (3) is one of the three data sources for Generalizations (4). Inferences (5) reflect what this author thinks should be taught in a preschool program (Statement of Values) in light of the information provided by the Generalizations. Objectives (6) for what the child should learn are formulated based on a synthesis of the Inferences and the goals of the Teacher and Parent Training Program (7 and 8). When a Situation (9) occurs, or is created which relates to the subject, Objectives are selected to create Learning Opportunities (10) to address the situation. What activities are designed and what the child learns from them is in part determined by the child's

CURRICULUM RATIONALE



natural course of development and planned developmental activities (Sequencing 11). Evaluation (12) of what the child has learned from the Learning Opportunities is the final process of curriculum development. Description of the components of this curriculum follow:

1. Learner: This curriculum is designed for three-, four- and five-year-old children in a preschool program.

2.A. Definition of Curriculum: Curriculum includes the rationale, the total process involved in the formulation of Objectives on this subject and the Learning Opportunities to actualize these Objectives. This author proposes that by providing the information on death and mourning and the knowledge of how to formulate Objectives, educators will be encouraged to develop Objectives and Learning Opportunities on this subject relevant to their particular classroom situations.

2.B. Statement of Values: Insofar as preschool experiences are planned, they are the product of selection. The choice of what is planned and the method chosen for its execution is therefore an institutionalization of a value system. This author believes that before an educator chooses to use a curriculum designed by another person s/he should be aware of the values and assumptions which underlie it. The following are four general assumptions of this author on which this curriculum is based:

1) The aim of school experience is to facilitate and support the self-actualization of the individual child. In this context, self-actualization refers to the child's capacity to develop to his/her full potential.

2) "Learning" is a freeing process--the acquiring of social, emotional and intellectual tools and skills frees a person to be more of him/herself.

   Example: A person who wants to know about planes is not free to do so unless s/he knows how to read (get the information), conceptualize insights, and use inductive and deductive reasoning.

   Example: A person who wants a friend is not free to make a friend unless s/he knows how to share, follow, initiate, and communicate.

3) Children seek self-actualization--Piaget (1963) explains this as a natural "reaching out" into the world in every human being as exemplified by the child's early accomplishment of the prehensory grip. When this "reaching out" process is not evident in a child or is aimed at self-destructive goals there is usually reason to look for emotional and social causes. When possible, it is the role of the preschool teacher to help the child resolve the problems which may be impeding this process.

4) The experiences that take place in school should be developmentally appropriate. Their purpose is to help the child grow into and refine his/her abilities and lead the way to growth into the next developmental states. This is applicable in terms of acquiring general abilities (fine motor coordination, etc.), in resolving life-crisis issues, i.e., unexpected and unusually stressful situations such as death of a loved person or a divorce, and in relation to the resolution of conflicts arising from normal developmental tasks as delineated by Erickson (1950) such as separation and autonomy and the development of sexual identity.

This curriculum represents this author's belief that insofar as death and death-related issues are experienced by a child, the preschool program should respond to the natural concerns that this subject raises by using developmentally appropriate Learning Opportunities that will facilitate the resolution of these concerns.

3. Subject: Review of literature (Chapter II) on the development of a concept and awareness of death and the facilitation of mourning for preschool-aged children. This is the source of material from which most of the data for Generalizations is derived. It is also a resource for the generation of Generalizations pertinent to one's own value system and perceived class needs on this subject.

4. Generalizations: These are statements, derived from data sources which underlie the Objectives of this curriculum. This mode of organization is derived from Tyler's model in which a Generalization consists of a statement of facts, trends, or outcomes of research and theoretical material (Tyler, 1950). The data sources for Generalizations are:

1) Society--the general attitude and approach to death and death-related issues of adults and social institutions in relation to young children as reported in Chapter I.

2) Subject--data sources under this heading are derived from the review of literature. They include:

   a. Cognitive abilities necessary for the development of a concept of death.

b. The development of a psychological awareness of death.

c. The interrelationship of cognitive and psychological abilities in relation to death.

d. The process of mourning and common problems and reactions children have while mourning.

e. Psychosocial and psychosexual developmental states as they affect the child's capacity to mourn.

3) Learner--data on the necessity for the child to learn about death and mourning.

5. Inferences: These are derived from an integration of this author's Statement of Values and information generated from the Generalizations. Inferences are statements about what this author, as the curriculum designer, feels the teaching staff and school program should do to facilitate meaningful learning experiences for the child on this subject.

6. Objectives: These are goals of what is to be learned stated in terms of the child. Two forms of Objectives are used:

1) Exploratory Objectives which describe an event to be experienced by the child.

2) Instructional Objectives which specify terminal behaviors and/or thoughts.

7. Teacher Training Program: This program is briefly outlined. It consists of a workshop or support group of educators (referred to as "teachers" in the following study). Teachers work together to question, integrate,

and expand on the curriculum material. Sensitization to the subject of this curriculum is explored in terms of the teacher's personal experiences and his/her feelings about the possible reactions of the children to death-related issues.

8. Parent Education Program: This program is a support group of parents who are given access to the same information (Review of Literature in Chapter II) as the teachers. The teachers review the material and help parents to relate it to their Objectives for their children at home. Questions about the material and the selection of Objectives are discussed. Consensus on major issues should be reached by teachers and parents in determining the basic goals for the classroom. Personal concerns and experiences in relation to the subject are shared by the group. Insight into oneself and one's child's behavior is encouraged.

9. Situation: This refers to a death-related situation which has arisen out of a child's concerns or curiosity, or from a situation planned by a teacher to facilitate growth on this subject, or from an unplanned occasion of death as in the death of a class pet.

10. Learning Opportunities: This refers to activities designed to actualize the Objectives considered relevant for a particular classroom situation. Three forms of Learning Opportunities have been developed--Planned, Planned

Emergent, and Emergent. A Planned Learning Opportunity refers to an activity which has been designed by the teaching staff to actualize chosen Objectives at a particular time in the school program. A Planned Emergent Learning Opportunity is one in which the Objectives are predetermined and the materials to actualize them are planned. For example, a teacher may place a book about death in the classroom. However, if and when a child chooses to relate to the activity or materials emerges from the interest and need of the child. An Emergent Learning Opportunity arises out of a child's spontaneous activities or questions. The teacher, in this instance, attempts to discern and address the underlying concerns of the child. Examples of each form of Learning Opportunity are provided in two hypothetical classroom situations in this curriculum (pp. 93-97).

11. Sequencing of Learning Opportunities: Much sequencing is accomplished by the teacher's selection of Objectives based on the developmental needs of a child. A second filter is the child. A child will not learn what s/he is not emotionally or cognitively ready or willing to learn. This is important to know especially in terms of group activities based on the issues presented by a death. The child will filter for him/herself. Learning Opportunities should be sequential in terms of building a child's

emotional and cognitive abilities in relation to death and mourning and providing experiences for a child's growth in a specific area of understanding such as mourning.

12. Evaluation: Evaluation is seen as a constant process that will focus on the individual growth of the child. Instructional Objectives can be assessed through direct measurements (e.g., list causes of death). Unobtrusive measures can be employed for some Objectives that can be behaviorally quantified. For example, an index to assess a child's separation anxiety in relation to his/her parents would be to observe and quantify over a period of time the length of time the child takes to separate from his/her parents and participate in classroom activities. One could deduce, therefore, that separation anxiety decreased if less time was needed by the child to leave his/her parents and join class activities. Subjective evaluation based on observations perceived by the teaching staff will be used for some Objectives because each child may indicate affective and cognitive growth in individual ways. A difficulty in evaluating the acquisition of an abstract concept or affective development is that it often takes a long time to see the effects of a learning experience. There is often a period of germination before one can observe what a child has internalized and understood about an experience. A longitudinal measure of a child's coping

abilities in relation to separation and death, and a means of identifying and evaluating critical incidents which could serve as an evaluation tool would be useful but, at present, are not developed.

Development of Objectives

This section provides the foundation for a curriculum on the development of a concept of death and facilitation of mourning for preschool-aged children. The Generalizations presented in this chapter represent selected examples of information derived from the three data sources described in the rationale--society, subject, and learner. Any number of Generalizations can be derived from the review of literature in Chapter II. For the purpose of this study, examples of Generalizations from each area covered in Chapter II will be included both to demonstrate that Objectives can be developed on this subject and to encourage educators to learn how to use this resource material.

Objectives underlie the formulation of Learning Opportunities. The following is a description of the process of formulating Objectives. Generalizations, as explained, have been selected from the data sources. Inferences have been formed which reflect an integration of this author's values in relation to the purposes of a preschool program and the information provided by the

Generalizations. Objectives are derived from the Inferences. They are always worded in terms of what the child is to learn. They are the specific teaching goals for the class program. For example--Generalization: an apparent consequence of asking direct questions about death is that children seem to clarify their ideas on the subject (Steiner, 1965). Inference: this author thinks that teachers should ask children direct questions about death. An Exploratory Objective might be to explore one's thoughts about death. An Instructional Objective could be to answer questions when directly asked about one's ideas about death. By acquiring the skills to create Objectives on this subject, teachers should be able to utilize this process for the needs of their own preschool programs.

Objectives

Society

Generalizations

1.A. Parents and educators avoid confronting the subject of death with children. To quote McDonald: ". . . many adults try to shield small children from any information at all about death . . . to spare themselves the role of instructor about a subject which they themselves find too difficult and painful" (1963, p. 19).

1.B. Children have questions and thoughts about death. Rochlin writes: "Death is a matter of deep consideration to the very young child . . . and his thoughts of dying are commonplace" (1967, p. 60).

Inferences

1.a. Teachers should take responsibility for addressing children's questions and thoughts about death.

1.b. School should be a place where children can get the information they need about death.

1.c. Teachers should encourage dialogue about death when it arises from a child's questions and concerns.

Exploratory Objectives [Objectives refer to what the child is to learn.]

1.1 To explore one's thoughts and feelings about death when they arise.

Instructional Objectives

1.2 To acquire information about death.

1.3 To verbally list information about death or to nonverbally give evidence of that information.

1.4 To apply information about death to relevant situations.

Subject

Cognitive Development

Generalizations

2.A. "The child's concept of death is dependent upon the total pattern of mental processes and resources available to him at a particular stage in his development" (Kastenbaum, 1967, p. 93).

2.B. To comprehend death a child has to acquire certain mental operations which include: "self awareness, logical thought operations, conceptions of probability, necessity and causation, of personal and physical time, of finality and separation" (Kastenbaum, 1967, p. 94) (see pp. 21-26).

Inferences

2.a. Teachers should be aware of the conceptual limitations in relation to a child's understanding of death.

2.b. Teachers should provide Learning Opportunities to foster the development of the conceptual abilities underlying a child's understanding of death.

Subject

Cognitive Development

Objectives

For the purposes of this study, an example of one Instructional Objective is listed under each Exploratory Objective. Many more Objectives can be developed.

2.1 To develop a concept of self-awareness.

2.2 To talk about and label how one feels while participating in school activities.

2.3 To develop logical thought operations.

2.4 To list what one needs to do to achieve a goal.

2.5 To develop a concept of probability, necessity, and causality.

2.6 To list the consequences of one's actions.

2.7 To develop a concept of personal time.

2.8 To describe and compare such qualities as one's appearance and knowledge of oneself as a toddler to being a preschool child in the present.

2.9 To develop a concept of physical time.

2.10 To list the activities that one has participated in from one's arrival at school in the

Subject

Cognitive Development

Objectives

morning to one's departure at the end of the school day.

2.11 To develop a concept of separation.

2.12 To name the class activities which precede the arrival of parents at school at the end of the school day and those that the children do after they leave with their parents.

Generalizations

3.A. "An apparent consequence of asking direct questions about death was that children seemed to clarify their ideas on the subject" (Steiner, 1965, p. 99).

3.B. "Children may benefit from a more precise and simplified vocabulary to help them to differentiate between live, dead and inanimate objects" (Steiner, 1965, p. 101).

Inferences

3.a. Teacher should ask children about their thoughts and feelings about death when appropriate.

Subject

Cognitive Development

Inferences

3.b. Teacher should provide Learning Opportunities to help children to differentiate among live, dead, and inanimate objects.

Instructional Objective

3.1 To differentiate among live, dead, and inanimate objects.

Generalization

4. "In questions about plants and animals and the human body, it is those which refer to death which will cause the child to leave behind him the stage of pure finalism (i.e., anthropomorphism) and to acquire the notion of statistical causality of chance" (Piaget, 1959, p. 40).

Inference

4.a. The teacher should encourage curiosity about death in relation to plants, animals, and the human body to facilitate the development of the child's understanding of statistical causality or chance.

Subject

Cognitive Development

Exploratory Objective

4.1 To explore and explain the causes for occurrences of curiosity and concern especially in relation to death or death-related experiences.

Instructional Objective

4.2 To ask questions about death in relation to plants, animals, and the human body.

Subject

Psychological Development

Generalizations

5.A. The child's psychological awareness of his/her own death and the death of his/her parents is developmental (Kastenbaum, 1967).

5.B. The child by three is prone to ask questions about death. Maurer states: "[The child] wants to know, 'What is the life-span of the human? How long will I live?'" (1974, p. 14) (see pp. 27-29).

Inference

5.a. Teachers should provide Learning Opportunities on death appropriate for the developmental needs of the child.

5.b. Teachers should be aware of the nature of the concerns about death for three-year-old children.

Exploratory Objective

5.1 To ask questions about death.

Instructional Objectives

5.2 To list ways of telling that something is dead.

5.3 To identify causes for death in people, plants, and pets.

5.4 To categorize causes of death.

Subject

Psychological Development

Generalizations

6.A. The affect pattern children under the age of seven associate with death is separation anxiety. Death is seen primarily as a departure (Portz, 1964) (see pp. 27-31).

6.B. Fears of abandonment, helplessness, and the child's dependence on his/her parents underlie separation anxiety. These fears are reignited when the child is exposed to a death-related experience (Maurer, 1966).

Inferences

6.a. Teachers should be aware of the close association for the child of separation and death and facilitate the child's differentiation of the two experiences.

6.b. Teachers should be aware of the fears underlying separation anxiety and death and facilitate a sense of stability, continuity, and closeness with children involved with these concerns.

6.c. Teachers should help a child identify, accept, and understand anxieties due to separation and death.

Subject

Psychological Development

Exploratory Objectives

6.1 To learn to identify, accept, and understand the feelings underlying separation and death-related experiences.

6.2 To ask for, or let oneself accept, the reassurance of continuity, stability, and closeness of supportive people and a supportive environment.

Instructional Objectives

6.3 To differentiate between death and separation (cognitive).

6.4 To differentiate between temporary and permanent loss due to circumstances as opposed to loss due to death.

6.5 To list characteristics of separation as opposed to a death.

6.6 To identify one's own and other important people's departures and returns to situations.

6.7 To acknowledge permanent separation.

Subject

Psychological-Cognitive Development

Generalizations

7.A. "[The child has an] . . . inevitable realization that the end of his existence as well as of those who care for him . . . occurs. These somber actualities weigh heavily enough to have a compelling emotional effect" (Rochlin, 1967, p. 52).

7.B. The child feels a need to defend him/herself against this awareness. Rochlin suggests that the function of defenses ". . . is to provide some security against the constant uncertainty, threat, or liability that the loss of a personally important object [person] . . . represents" (1965, p. 59).

7.C. This author proposes that children develop thoughts about death to cope with the discomfort and anxiety an awareness of death evokes. These thoughts reflect the need of a child to defend against an awareness of death and their cognitive limitations (see pp. 31-33).

7.D. An apparent consequence of asking direct questions about death is that children seem to clarify their ideas on the subject (Steiner, 1965).

Subject

Psychological-Cognitive Development

Inferences

7.a. Teachers should be aware that children have thoughts and feelings about death.

7.b. "The child may benefit from knowing that all people think about it [death] and that his thoughts are not unique" (Steiner, 1965, p. 111).

7.c. Children's level of comfort is facilitated by sharing discussion on their thoughts and feelings about death.

Exploratory Objectives

7.1 To actively engage in verbal discussion of thoughts and feelings about death.

7.2 To actively engage in nonverbal participation in discussions about death (attending behavior).

Instructional Objective*

Generalizations

8.A. Children relate a death occurrence to themselves. This is attributed to the child's emotional and cognitive limitations. Self-reference (Rochlin,

*It is recommended that these not be planned. The teacher will help a child understand his/her individual defenses, etc., as they become apparent to the teacher and if it is thought to be appropriate.

Subject

Psychological-Cognitive Development

Generalizations

see p. 29-30) and egocentric thought operations are thought to characterize much of the preschool child's mode of relating to experience (Steiner, see p. 23).

8.B. The awareness of death is thought to be experienced by the child on two levels: the awareness of one's own mortality and the awareness of the possibility of the death of one's parents (Rochlin, 1965; Maurer, 1966).

Inferences

8.a. Teachers should reassure children that a death or death-related occurrence will not necessarily happen to them or their parents.

8.b. Teachers should provide experiences for the children to master their fears by learning to differentiate themselves and their families from a death or death-related occurrence.

Exploratory Objectives

8.1 To acknowledge the fear that the awareness of one's own mortality and that of one's parent's mortality arouses.

Subject

Psychological-Cognitive Development

Exploratory Objectives

8.2 To master one's fear that the death has not happened and will not necessarily happen to oneself or one's parents immediately.

Instructional Objectives

8.3 To acknowledge the death or death-related occurrence.

8.4 To acknowledge the cause of the death or death-related occurrence.

8.5 To acknowledge that the occurrence has not happened and will not necessarily happen in the near future to oneself or one's parents.

8.6 To acknowledge that s/he will not in all probability die [in the present].

Subject

Mourning

Generalizations

9.A. Mourning is the primary task of the child in dealing with a death that is personally important to him/her (Kliman, 1974).

9.B. Mourning consists of a gradual withdrawal of emotions and attachment from the loved person so that the emotional energy is freed and new love relationships can be formed (Kliman, 1974).

Inferences

9.a. The teacher should facilitate mourning by encouraging a child to experience protest, sadness and loss, and hope [a sense that the child will go on to form new attachments] (Bowlby, 1969).

9.b. The teacher should encourage the expression of strong feelings, confession, remembrance, and release of feelings about the loved person, pet, or object.

Exploratory Objectives

9.1 To withdraw emotional attachment from the loved person, pet, or object.

Subject

Mourning

Exploratory Objectives

9.2 To experience protest and/or aggression in relation to the death when felt.

9.3 To experience sadness when felt in relation to the dead person, pet, or object.

9.4 To express feelings, confessions, and remembrances of the loved person, pet, or object.

Instructional Objective

9.5 To form new close attachments.

Generalizations

10.A. A child needs to test the reality of the loved person's [pet or object] permanent absence (Freud, S., 1917).

10.B. The child needs the help of adults to test the reality of a death and thereby come to acknowledge it (Furman, 1974).

Inference

10.a. The teaching staff should be aware of and provide opportunities for the child's need to test the reality of permanent loss.

Subject

Mourning

Exploratory Objective

10.1 To question or explore the reality of permanent loss.

Instructional Objective

10.2 To acknowledge and question the permanence of death.

Generalization

11. Guilt is a common reaction to death (Grollman, 1967) (see p. 41).

Inference

11.a. Teachers should provide Learning Opportunities to help the child distinguish between the child's involvement with the dead person, pet, or plant and the cause of death.

Exploratory Objectives

11.1 To express what one feels about the cause of a death.

11.2 To express guilt if that is what is felt.

11.3 To not feel personally responsible [guilty] for a death.

11.4 To accept ambivalent feelings about the dead person, pet, or object.

Subject

Mourning

Instructional Objectives

11.5 To name cause of death.

11.6 To verbalize incidents of liking and disliking the dead person, pet, or object.

Generalizations

12.A. Self-reference is a primary response of a child to a death (Rochlin, 1965).

12.B. The fear engendered by the occurrence of a death in school may make a child feel insecure and unsafe.

Inferences

12.a. Teachers should be aware that a child may feel personally threatened by the occurrence of a death of a person, pet, or object.

12.b. Teachers should be aware that a child may feel unsafe and unprotected by the teacher if a death or death-related occurrence takes place in, or is related to, the school.

Exploratory Objective

12.1 To discuss feelings about one's teacher [if anger, clinging behavior, or overreaction to teacher separations occur].

Subject

Mourning

Instructional Objectives

12.2 To identify and label fear or anger at the teacher.

12.3 To distinguish between one's emotions at a teacher's leaving the classroom and/or one's fear of being permanently abandoned.

Subject

Mourning: Psychosocial-Psychosexual Development

Generalizations

13.A. The mourning process is influenced by the stage of psychosexual and psychosocial development of the child at the time s/he is experiencing a death (Rochlin, 1965; Kliman, 1969) (see pp. 39-40).

13.B. To experience mourning, it is important that the child reach the stage of "object constancy"; this means that the child has internalized a representation of the lost person. It is thought that once a child has the capacity to remember the dead person, s/he can then "give up" the person (Furman, 1974).

Inferences

13.a. Teachers should be aware of reactions in the child that would indicate a lack of development of object constancy.

13.b. Teachers should facilitate the development of object constancy in a child although this is usually developed before a child is in preschool.

Subject

Mourning: Psychosocial-Psychosexual Development

Exploratory Objective

13.1 To maintain an internalized representation of a lost person, pet, or object.

Instructional Objectives

13.2 To describe characteristics of one's parents while separated from them in school.

13.3 To describe characteristics of a lost person, pet, or object.

13.4 To separate from parents without undue anxiety.

Generalization

14. Mourning is often difficult in the ambivalent-sadistic stage of child development. The three-year-old child is thought to be often too bound up in aggression towards a loved person to experience the sadness the loss has occasioned (Rochlin, 1955).

Inference

14.a. Teachers should accept the expression of ambivalent feelings [sadness and aggression] towards a dead person, pet, or object.

Subject

Mourning: Psychosocial-Psychosexual Development

Exploratory Objective

14.1 To experience aggression towards the dead parent, pet, or object when felt.

Instructional Objective

14.2 To label affective experience of anger towards absent person, pet, or object when felt.

Generalization

15. The mourning process is complicated when a death occurs from a violent act that the child has experienced while dealing personally with castration anxieties (Rochlin, 1965).

Inferences

15.a. Teacher should encourage child's exploration of what s/he thinks happened at the time of the death.

15.b. Teacher should encourage the child's exploration of his/her fears provoked by the death.

Exploratory Objectives

15.1 To explore one's theories on the nature and cause of death.

15.2 To explore one's fears provoked by the death or death-related incident.

Subject

Mourning: Psychosocial-Psychosexual Development

Instructional Objective

15.3 To describe verbally or graphically the violent act observed or associated to a death.

Learner

Generalizations

16.A. "Learning about death is a task every child inevitably faces because death is an inescapable reality of life" (McDonald, 1963, p. 19).

16.B. "When a child encounters something in the outer world, such as death, that will cause him emotional pain if he fully comprehends it, he needs not only to have his fullest comprehension of the facts encouraged, but needs just as much to have the expression and recognition of his appropriate, though painful, emotions encouraged" (McDonald, 1963, p. 20).

Inference

16.a. "The child . . . needs to have expression of his feelings recognized and named in words in order that he himself can begin to recognize them and to understand why he has them" (McDonald, 1963, p. 20).

Exploratory Objectives

16.1 To express what one feels.

16.2 To express what one feels about death.

16.3 To understand what one is feeling.

Instructional Objectives

16.4 To name what one feels.

16.5 To ask for what one needs.

16.6 To nonverbally communicate what one needs.

List of Objectives

Objectives have been developed for each of the three data sources delineated in the rationale with an emphasis on addressing the general areas reviewed in Chapter II on the development of a concept of death and ability to mourn for preschool children. The Objectives provide a foundation for responding to a death or death-related occurrence in a preschool program. To demonstrate this, the Objectives have been utilized to create Learning Opportunities to meet the needs of two hypothetical classroom situations.

The process of developing Objectives on this subject has been demonstrated. A compilation of the Objectives that have been formulated is listed. The purpose of this list is to facilitate reference to the Objectives for the design of Learning Opportunities. The number preceeding an Objective is to help the reader to refer to the Generalizations from which it is derived. Further Objectives can be created from the Generalizations selected for this study. Educators are encouraged to utilize the review of literature as a resource to derive information and to generate Objectives relevant to their particular classroom needs.

Objectives

1.1 To explore one's thoughts and feelings about death when they arise.

1.2 To acquire information about death.

1.3 To verbally list information about death, or to nonverbally give evidence of that information.

1.4 To apply information about death to relevant situations.

2.1 To develop a concept of self awareness.

2.2 To talk about and label how one feels while participating in school activities.

2.3 To develop logical thought operations.

2.4 To list what one needs to do to achieve a goal.

2.5 To develop a concept of probability, necessity, and causality.

2.6 To list the consequences of one's actions.

2.7 To develop a concept of personal time.

2.8 To describe and compare such qualities as one's appearance and knowledge of oneself as a toddler to being a preschool child in the present.

2.9 To develop a concept of physical time.

2.10 To list the activities that one has participated in from one's arrival at school in the morning to one's departure at the end of the school day.

2.11 To develop a concept of separation.

2.12 To name the class activities which precede the arrival of parents at school at the end of the school day and those that the children do after they leave with their parents.

3.1 To differentiate among live, dead, and inanimate objects.

4.1 To explore and explain the causes for occurrences of curiosity and concern especially in relation to death or death-related experiences.

4.2 To ask questions about death in relation to plants, animals, and the human body.

5.1 To ask questions about death.

5.2 To list ways of telling that something is dead.

5.3 To identify causes for death in people, plants, and pets.

5.4 To categorize causes of death.

6.1 To learn to identify, accept, and understand the feelings underlying separation and death-related experiences.

6.2 To ask for, or let oneself accept, the reassurance of continuity, stability, and closeness of supportive people and a supportive environment.

6.3 To differentiate between death and separation (cognitive).

6.4 To differentiate between temporary or permanent loss due to circumstances as opposed to loss due to death.

6.5 To list characteristics of separation as opposed to a death.

6.6 To identify one's own and other important people's departures and returns to situations.

6.7 To acknowledge permanent separation.

7.1 To actively engage in verbal discussion of thoughts and feelings about death.

7.2 To actively engage in nonverbal participation in discussions about death (attending behavior).

8.1 To acknowledge the fear that the awareness of one's own mortality and that of one's parent's mortality arouses.

8.2 To master one's fear that the death has not happened and will not necessarily happen to oneself or one's parents immediately.

8.3 To acknowledge the death and death-related occurrence.

8.4 To acknowledge the cause of the death or death-related occurrence.

8.5 To acknowledge that the occurrence has not happened and will not necessarily happen in the near future to oneself or one's parents.

8.6 To acknowledge that s/he will not, in all probability, die [in the present].

9.1 To withdraw emotional attachment from the loved person, pet, or object.

9.2 To experience protest and/or aggression in relation to the death when felt.

9.3 To experience sadness when felt in relation to the dead person, pet, or object.

9.4 To express feelings, confessions, and remembrances of the loved person, pet, or object.

9.5 To form new close attachments.

10.1 To question or explore the reality of permanent loss.

10.2 To acknowledge and question the permanence of death.

11.1 To express what one feels about the cause of death.

11.2 To express guilt if that is what is felt.

11.3 To not feel personally responsible [guilty] for a death.

11.4 To accept ambivalent feelings about the dead person, pet, or object.

11.5 To name cause of death.

11.6 To verbalize incidents of liking or disliking the dead person, pet, or object.

12.1 To discuss feelings about one's teacher [if anger, clinging behavior, or overreaction to teacher separations occur].

12.2 To identify and label fear or anger at the teacher.

12.3 To distinguish between one's emotions at a teacher leaving the classroom and one's fear of being permanently abandoned.

13.1 To maintain an internalized representation of a lost person, pet, or object.

13.2 To describe characteristics of one's parents while separated from them in school.

13.3 To describe characteristics of a lost person, pet, or object.

13.4 To separate from parents without undue anxiety.

14.1 To experience aggression towards the dead parent, pet, or object when felt.

14.2 To label affective experience of anger towards absent person, pet, or object.

15.1 To explore one's theories on the nature and cause of death.

15.2 To explore one's fears provoked by the death or death-related incident.

15.3 To describe verbally or graphically the violent act observed or associated to a death.

16.1 To express what one feels.

16.2 To express what one feels about death.

16.3 To understand what one is feeling.

16.4 To name what one feels.

16.5 To ask for what one needs.

16.6 To nonverbally communicate what one needs.

Teaching Training Program

The following is a list of general goals for a workshop or support group for educators who are interested in applying this curriculum.

1) To explore and become sensitive to the personal feelings and issues the subject of death and mourning raise in oneself.

2) To understand the child's awareness of death in relation to his/her cognitive, emotional, and psychosocial and psychosexual abilities. To quote Leviton and Forman: "Our suggestion for those dealing with children on taboo subjects such as sexuality and death is to know thoroughly both the subject matter and counseling techniques" (1974, p. 8).

3) To develop an awareness of the process of mourning and the issues it raises for a child.

4) To recognize and understand one's own possible reactions to the child's behaviors while the child is mourning.

5) To explore the Objectives and Learning Opportunities outlined in this curriculum in terms of one's own value system and perceived needs of the preschool class.

6) To generate one's own Objectives and Learning Opportunities.

7) To explore objectives and means to implement a parent education workshop or support group in this subject.

Parent Education Program

This author feels that this program should closely parallel the Teaching Training Program. A strong emphasis should be placed on reaching mutual understandings of the major curriculum Objectives and on the coordination of goals for home and school on this subject.

Learning Opportunities

Learning Opportunities are created to meet the needs of situations which occur in a classroom. Two death-related situations have been created for this curriculum. The activities designed are examples of the three forms of Learning Opportunities described in the rationale: Planned, Planned Emergent, and Emergent. The purpose of creating Learning Opportunities is to demonstrate that activities can be designed to actualize Objectives on this subject in a preschool program. They are examples of activities to illustrate how educators can apply this process in their own classroom.

Objectives previously formulated in terms of a personal death and mourning are applied to the child's separation from parents the first day of school and the death of a class pet. The underlying issues of death and mourning are raised by these situations and provide a frame of reference in terms of building the emotional and cognitive abilities that are needed for a situation involving a personal death.

For example, in terms of a class pet, Grollman states: "When a pet dies, the child is brought face to face with some of the implications of death--its complete finality and the grief and loss it inflicts" (1967, p. 13).

Situation I

Children are separating from their parents on the first day of school.

Objectives

13.4 To separate from parents without undue anxiety.

2.9 To develop a concept of physical time.

2.10 To list the activities that one has participated in from one's arrival at school in the morning to one's departure at the end of the school day.

2.11 To develop a concept of separation.

2.12 To name the class activities which precede the arrival of parents at school at the end of the school day and those that the children do after they leave with their parents.

1) Planned Emergent Learning Opportunity

The teaching staff will provide a variety of activities to engage the interests of the child. Activities offered will include open-ended and closed materials and activities which can be engaged in individually or involve groups of children.

2) Planned Learning Opportunity

The teacher will have a "circle time" where s/he will tell a story which will recount the child's day. This story

will include the child's experiences starting from waking up at home, dressing, anticipating the first day of school with eagerness and fear, entrance into the room and meeting the teacher, hesitation and sadness at leaving parents, and an account of the activities in school. Pictures of the activity areas of the classroom with labels and pictures of each child and the teacher will be included.

3) Planned Emergent Learning Opportunity

The teacher will work individually with each child to help the child form an attachment to him/her and to help the child engage in an activity or join company with another child. The teacher, at this time, will encourage the child's expression of feelings about being in school without his/her parent and will help recount for the child the sequence of activities until the parent returns and those that the child will engage in after s/he leaves school.

Evaluation

A.1. The child can name the class activities which precede the arrival of parents at the end of the school day.

2. The child can separate from parents and 1) form attachments to teachers and peers, and 2) engage in activities.

B. Sequential signs of development

1. The teacher progressively spends less time with individual children before they can engage in activities.
2. The children progressively become more independent in selecting and creating activities to engage in.
3. The child progressively spends less time separating from parent.

Situation II

A class pet rabbit has died over the weekend. When the children come to class Monday morning they see the rabbit lying in its cage.

Exploratory Objectives

7.1 To actively engage in verbal discussion of thoughts and feelings about death.

7.2 To actively engage in nonverbal discussion of thoughts and feelings about death (attending behavior).

16.1 To express what one feels (about the dead rabbit).

9.4 To express feelings, confessions, and remembrances of the loved pet.

Instructional Objectives

5.2 To list ways of telling that something (the animal) is dead.

5.4 To categorize the causes of death (reasons why the pet may have died).

1) Emergent Learning Opportunity

Teacher-Facilitator will observe each child's response to the rabbit. S/He will talk with each child individually to help them reach the conclusion that the rabbit is dead.

The teacher will be with the child while s/he is experiencing the initial response to the death and share this experience with the child. S/He may comment on the child's reactions, engage in dialogue about what the child is experiencing, or quietly share the experience.

2) Planned Learning Opportunity

Teacher-Facilitator will hold a group discussion. Discussion will center on listing characteristics of death in the rabbit and distinguishing these from the children's "aliveness." Physically observable characteristics are stressed to facilitate comparison such as heartbeat and movement. It is emphasized that the rabbit is not asleep or sick.

3) Planned Emergent Learning Opportunity

Discussion in a group on the causes of death is held. Personal blame is avoided. However, if a child has concerns about his/her personal responsibility for the death (guilt) s/he is encouraged to talk about it. Exploration of the children's theories of death and its causes are stressed.

4) Planned Emergent Learning Opportunity

Group discussion by the class of individual stories and incidents with the rabbit and feelings associated with them.

"Learning about death is a task every child inevitably faces because death is an inescapable reality of life" (McDonald, 1963, p. 19). This chapter presents a model curriculum on the development of a concept of death and ability to mourn for preschool programs. It is designed to address both death-related situations and the occurrence of a personal death. The curriculum is divided into three sections. The first is a rationale which consists of a statement of the criteria this curriculum should meet and the definition and relationship of the components which compose the process of its formulation. The second section develops Objectives on this subject derived from chosen Generalizations representative of the three data sources described in the rationale. Emphasis is placed on formulating Objectives on the areas covered by the review of literature. Section three provides two classroom death-related situations and demonstrates that it is possible to utilize selected Objectives to create Learning Opportunities to address these situations.

The presentation of the curriculum also clearly delineates the processes involved in its formulation to encourage educators to create Objectives and Learning Opportunities on this subject for their classrooms.

C H A P T E R I V

PILOT STUDY

The primary concern of this dissertation has been to explore the possibility of creating a curriculum on death and the facilitation of mourning for preschool children. The conceptual framework and several Objectives for a curriculum on this subject have been developed in Chapter III. This chapter will explore the feasibility of translating the Generalizations and Objectives created in the model curriculum into practice through demonstrating its use through a pilot study.

Thus far, the review of literature has provided information on the development of a child's cognitive and psychological awareness of death, the process of mourning, and the particular defenses and issues death and mourning may raise for young children. The curriculum in Chapter III has developed Objectives and demonstrated a process of curriculum development utilizing the theoretical and research material from the review of literature as the foundation for Generalizations from which Learning Opportunities were designed. The pilot study provides an example of how one preschool staff utilized the curriculum as a basis for responding to a classroom situation in which a four-year-old child died of pneumonia.

The validity of a curriculum on this subject remains hypothetical unless it can be shown that it is feasible to translate the theoretical model to create Learning Opportunities for an actual classroom. This pilot study will provide an example of how one preschool program utilized both the formulated Objectives and the process of curriculum development established in Chapter III to create Learning Opportunities to facilitate the development of a concept of death and mourning when a class member died.

To illustrate how one could evaluate the effectiveness of an intervention, some assessment of the observational data will be discussed as will some speculation and analysis of the Generalizations underlying the activities.

Description of the School

The Neighborhood Day School is a preschool for normal children set up in the Children's Unit of the Massachusetts Mental Health Center. The school is a community-based, tuition-free class for ten three-to-five-year-old children. The children all live within the immediate neighborhood of the mental health center. Except for a few middle-class children, the children are from the lower socio-economic groups.

The school is organized as an "open-structured" program. The classroom is divided into interest areas which include art activities, a "house" area, blocks,

science and reading readiness materials, and a group meeting area. Structured activities such as juice time and a class meeting are part of the daily routine. One-half of the class time is a "free play" period in which children choose activities and are encouraged to develop their own projects. At this time there are usually one or two planned activities offered, such as a cooking project or special art activity.

Aside from daily informal contact with the teacher, the parents and teacher meet as a group on a weekly basis. Discussion usually centers around developmental issues the children are involved with and parents' concerns about "parenting."

The class is conducted by a Teacher-Director and student teacher. Aside from its community function, the school is also a training facility for child Psychiatry residents who participate directly in the classroom. A supervising staff psychiatrist is also directly involved in the room. Consequently, there are often three adults in the class. Daily observations of each child are recorded by participants and are reviewed at the end of each day by the teaching staff. Issues of child development and concerns about individual children are reviewed in a weekly seminar of all the participants.

Emergent Situation

On November 30, during the Thanksgiving holiday, Rosemary, a child in the preschool program, died. Rosemary had been sick and eventually hospitalized with a diagnosis of pneumonia. The class had been told about her hospitalization. The story Madeline had been read at a group meeting and children's experiences with hospitals were discussed. Some of the children drew pictures for the teacher to take to the hospital. Her visit was then reported in class. The staff was told of the death after class on the Monday following Thanksgiving recess. The teacher had previously taken a workshop by this author on "The Development of a Child's Concept of Death and Facilitation of Mourning." An awareness of the issues presented by this occurrence helped her to initiate the first interventions.

Each child's parent was called by the teacher. They were told of the death and supported through their initial shock and grief. After responding to questions about the circumstances of the death and funeral arrangements, the teacher discussed the necessity for the parents to explain the death to their children. Specifically, she asked them to think about how they felt about Rosemary's death and, in whatever words felt most comfortable, share their thoughts and feelings about it with their children. She then

identified and explained some common questions and reactions they may observe in their children and, in so doing, conveyed her own acceptance of them. No parent objected to telling the child about the death although a few were clearly worried about their child's reactions. The teacher also set a date for a parent meeting (Appendix I). These interventions were based primarily on two sets of Generalizations.

Generalizations

1A) Parents and educators avoid confronting the subject of death with children (IA, Ch. III).

1B) ". . . many adults try to shield small children from any information at all about death . . . to spare themselves the role of instructor about a subject which they themselves find too difficult and painful" (McDonald, 1963, p. 19) (IA, Ch. III).

Inferences

1.a. Staff should provide parents the support they will need to be open with their own feelings and accepting of their children's feelings about Rosemary's death.

2.a., Staff should facilitate the legitimization of the home as a safe environment to explore one's questions and feelings about death.

Objectives [The learner, in this instance, is the parent].

1.1 To explore one's thoughts and feelings about Rosemary's death in one's home and allow one's child to do so.

1.2 To convey Rosemary's death to one's child.

1.3 To be aware of and accept one's child's reactions to the death.

Learning Opportunities

1. Phone conversation as support and model for parent.
2. Parent-staff evening meeting to share information, experiences, and concerns about this occurrence.
3. Suggestions on what to tell one's child.
4. Identification of some feelings and reactions a child may have.

Generalization

2. Self-reference is a dominant reaction of a child to a death (8.A., Ch. III).

Inference

2.a. Parents should be made aware of this reaction and reassure their children that this occurrence will not happen to them or to themselves.

Objectives [The learner is the parent.]

2.1. To clarify the cause of Rosemary's death.

2.2. To differentiate between Rosemary's illness and children's experiences with colds, hospitals, etc.

2.3. To reassure child that this occurrence will not happen to them.

Learning Opportunities

1. Parent will talk with child and help him/her differentiate between Rosemary's death and their experiences with colds, hospitals, etc. (first sequencing of this Objective).
2. Parent will verbally reassure the child that s/he will not die nor will the parents (first sequencing of this Objective).
3. Parents will demonstrate through nonverbal and verbal behaviors that they will be a stable force throughout this stressful time.

Following this initial series of interventions, a more formal procedure was established to meet the needs of this situation.

Process of Curriculum Formulation

Staff Meetings

The Teacher-Director, Consulting Psychiatrist, and this author met routinely to formulate Learning Opportunities to meet the evolving individual and group needs of the children. Observations were recorded daily by the staff. For specific planned interventions, this author recorded observations from behind a one-way mirror. Observational data presented in the discussion of classroom activities reflects the compiled records of this group.

Routine review of the classroom data in relation to the material available on the development of a concept of death and the facilitation of mourning became the basis for an assessment of each child's development and, therefore, a basis for formulating new Objectives and curriculum activities. This method of sequencing of Learning Opportunities is congruent with the curriculum rationale in which the "Learner" is a major data source for the selection of Generalizations.

The staff meetings also provided a forum to discuss reactions of the children not anticipated or discussed in the review of literature. The need to take this data into account in relation to the development of a more comprehensive theory of a child's understanding of death and ability to mourn will be discussed in the Conclusion.

Curriculum Development

The following is a description of the general process, modeled after the rationale in Chapter III, underlying the design of activities and the staff's responses to emergent situations in the class.

To formulate Objectives appropriate for the emergent needs of the class, it was necessary for the material on death and mourning to become a fully integrated and familiar body of information. Generalizations were often chosen from Chapter III. To meet the specific situation of a death of a class member, Generalizations were also formulated based on information in the review of literature. At this point, Inferences were developed by the staff based on our overall goals for the children and our perception of the immediate needs of the class. As in the rationale, this input influenced the translation of Generalizations to Objectives. Objectives were then developed and underlie the design of the Learning Opportunities used. Several alternative activities could usually be formulated from each Objective and combination of Objectives. This pilot study is a presentation of examples of specific Learning Opportunities developed by the staff that they felt would best actualize the Objectives to meet the needs of the children in this particular situation.

Assuming the reader's familiarity with the review of literature in Chapter II, discussion of curriculum intervention will be limited to the inclusion of Objectives as a point of reference. When the origin of an Objective may seem unclear, the reader will be referred to its source in Chapters II and III.

Curriculum

It was expected that this unanticipated and tragic death would have an effect on each of the class members. The staff decided to use Rosemary's death as an opportunity to help the children exercise their abilities to cope with this anxiety arousing occurrence and to facilitate the children's emotional and cognitive growth in terms of a deeper understanding of the meaning of life and death. As a statement of values and a major frame of reference for developing Inferences, it was therefore clear that it would be necessary to help the children to personally relate to Rosemary's death by providing experiences that would give information about death while differentiating it from general sickness and separation. Activities would also have to be designed to help the children identify and accept their affective responses to the death. Group and individualized teacher-student activities would also be needed to provide the emotional support to allow the children to

experience and resolve the many issues and conflicts it was expected that death and mourning would present.

To attain these goals, three forms of Learning Opportunities were developed based on the following premises:

1) The ability to cope with this experience and the defenses used by each child were highly individualized.
2) The learning styles and intellectual abilities of the children were varied.
3) The material itself consists of highly interrelated components of cognitive and emotional information which would be responded to and integrated by each child according to their individual readiness and sequencing process.

As a result of these considerations, it was felt necessary to provide several forms of Learning Opportunities. Activities were designed to fit into three basic categories: Planned, Planned Emergent, and Emergent. Selected Learning Opportunities representative of each category will be described.

Planned Learning Opportunity

The criteria of a Planned Learning Opportunity are that the Objectives are clearly formulated and the activity chosen for the class is designed specifically to actualize

these Objectives at a predetermined time. Examples of Planned curriculum are the first phone call to the parents, as previously described an initial discussion of Rosemary's death in class, and two readings of the book The Dead Bird six months apart, with the book available in the library area between group meetings. (The Dead Bird differentiates between an alive and dead bird, describes how children felt about the death of a bird and how they coped with it through a funeral they conducted.) Other Planned activities included a book created by the teacher consisting of pictures of all the children and discussion of events including Rosemary's death. This was read towards the end of the school program with each child receiving a copy of the book. A final discussion held by the Consulting Psychiatrist the last week of school focused on the development of the children's cognitive and emotional understanding of death both in relation to themselves and as a separate concept (Appendix II).

The following description of a curriculum activity is an example of a Planned Learning Opportunity.

Situation I

> The children have arrived in class after having been told about Rosemary's death by their parents the previous evening.

Objectives [Refer to what the child is to learn. Numbers are derived from the list of Objectives in Chapter III.]

8.3 To acknowledge the occurrence of Rosemary's death.

11.5 To name the cause of the death.

8.5 To acknowledge that the occurrence has not happened and will not necessarily happen in the near future to oneself or to one's parents.

15.1 To explore one's theories on the nature and cause of death.

7.1 To actively engage in verbal discussion of thoughts and feelings about death.

7.2 To actively engage in nonverbal participation in discussions about death (attending behavior).

1.2 To acquire information about death.

6.2 To ask for, or let oneself accept, the reassurance of continuity, stability, and closeness of supportive people and a supportive environment.

Planned Learning Opportunities

Several activities could be designed to actualize these Objectives. The staff, in this instance, chose to conduct a group meeting at the start of the school day. The teacher's discussion covered the above Objectives in terms of acknowledging Rosemary's death with the children while

expressing her feelings about it and carefully differentiating the cause of death from the childrens' experience with sickness and colds. She provided information on death and the funeral-burial process while encouraging children to express their thoughts and feelings about the death and concerns associated with it. Within the context of a stable, supportive group environment, she supported their attempts to explore and understand this experience and respected their needs for denial, withdrawal, etc. that were in evidence.

Group Meeting

The teacher (T.) told each child (C.) that there would be a class meeting in the group area. The children were unusually reluctant to come to the meeting. Two children brought toys with them. Although this would normally be discouraged, the teacher made no mention of it. Several children vied to be physically near the two staff members present.

T. "I have something very sad I want to share with you. . . ."

C. "We know, Rosemary's dead."

"My Mommy cried."

T. "Yes, it's a very sad time and some people feel like crying and maybe some of you feel like it. . . ."

Michael (a Psychiatric Resident) walked into the room. Upon his joining the group, various children announced to him that Rosemary had died.

T. "Rosemary was very, very sick--a kind of sickness that children do not usually get. It's not like a cold or stomach ache [This had been discussed in previous talks on the child's hospitalization]. The doctors did all they could to help her get better, but her body was not strong enough, so she died."

C. "Yes, she would be buried in the ground."

"No, in a box."

"She will be burned." [This comment was made by an Indian boy for whom this is a culturally expected procedure.]

"I died." [Said by a child who was visibly disoriented. His words were garbled while uncontrollably laughing as he repeated this several times.]

T. "You may be worried that you, too, could die . . . but although you have had colds, you have not had the very serious illness that Rosemary had and you won't die."

C. "I died." [Said by same child in same manner.

One adult put his arm around the child's shoulder and this appeared to help him calm himself.]

C. "She will die and go to heaven."

T. "Some people like to think that when you die your body goes to a special place called heaven and some people like to think you get wings. Everybody has a different idea about what happens to your body after you die. But Rosemary's body is now in a special box in a place called a funeral home. Her mother and father are there and that is where some of your mothers and fathers are so they can share their sad feelings together. The box with Rosemary's body will be taken to a cemetery and put in the ground."

C. "She'll fly up to the sky."

C. "I've been to a cemetery and flowers were on someone's grave."

C. "You get wings and fly up to heaven."

Conversation waned. There was no further mention of Rosemary's death. However, the children continued to sit close together. Relatively quiet parallel play ensued for another ten minutes. The teacher later commented: "The children were cohesive in a way I had never observed before."

Discussion

By reviewing the responses of the children to this intervention, the following discussion will provide examples of the process of evaluation, based on observational data, to assess the effectiveness of a Planned Learning Opportunity and the underlying Objectives and Generalizations it was designed to meet.

That many of the Objectives were met within the immediate context of this meeting is apparent. For many children, there was a spontaneous acknowledgement of Rosemary's death (5.3) and comments on their theories about death (15.1) which confirms the Generalization that children do have theories about death (G.1.B., Ch. III). The reluctance to come to the meeting, bringing diversionary toys, avoidance of participating in the conversation by some children, and the termination of conversation on this topic by all the children after a period can be viewed as a confirmation of the children's discomfort with this topic (G.7.A., Ch. III) and/or defenses against confronting their feelings (G.7.B., Ch. III). Self-reference was most directly evidenced by one child's anxious repetition of "I died" (G.8.A., Ch. III).

It is difficult to surmise, from the observational data, what specific information was learned about death, or, if at this point, the cause of death was clearly

perceived by the children as differentiated from their experiences with sickness (8.5). The variation of response to the discussion confirmed the staff's conviction that the children would take a long time to assimilate this experience and the rate of assimilation would be highly dependent on the learning capacity and style, emotional readiness, and defenses of each child. It also demonstrates the limitations of assessment of the effectiveness of an intervention based on observational data of the specific activity alone. For this reason, observation of the emergent activities immediately following the disbursement of the group meeting was recorded and is discussed to more fully comprehend and assess the effectiveness of this initial meeting.

Following the meeting, two distinct groups of children formed and these groups remained intact for the following three weeks. The first group consisted of three girls with one boy entering intermittantly. This group's activities were characterized by explicit dramatization of scenes involving the death of a child. This role-play usually took place in the "house" corner where a "hospital" scene was enacted involving the sick child, a mother, and a doctor. On the day of the group meeting, for example, a girl ducked under a nearby table and exclaimed: "I'm a dead girl, but my name is Julie." The girls then went to the "house" corner where two of them took turns being the dead child

lying motionless on a "bed," and the third girl played a sympathetic and administering mother. The hospital scene became more elaborate in the ensuing weeks and burial became the main focus of exploration toward the end of the school year.

The second group consisted of two boys who habitually played together and two other boys who had previously played by themselves. Their play involved the use of trucks and cars crashing against each other, the construction and destruction of garages, etc. Progressively, the theme of trucks running over bodies and death became more explicit. The use of displacement and mastery characterized this form of exploration of death. Although much of this play was not accompanied by descriptive dialogue there were often comments by the children about who died and what caused it. Insight about the underlying thoughts and feelings attributed to this play are exemplified by the comments of a child who engaged the teacher while crashing a truck following the meeting:

> C. "I want to smash the windowshield. My nightmare crashed the window and picked the car up. The truck crashed and the man died. The ambulance picked them up and took them to the hospital [the child put the male doll in a box]. He's

going to the dead place underground. He's flying away with the wings."

Another example, taken from observations made a week later, again took place while a boy was crashing cars. The child explained to the teacher about a shooting which had just occurred in his play.

T. "What if you shoot a person?"

C. "He will be dead."

T. "What does that mean?"

C. "He will die. He will be dead for ever and ever."

Discussion

These observations help overcome the limitations of assessment of a Planned Learning Opportunity on this subject by attending to the emergent activities following an intervention. For instance, it is now apparent that all of the children were actively engaged in exploring their thoughts and feelings about death (1.1, 15.1). It may be infered, therefore, that the classroom had become a safe environment for this exploration (6.2). The need and acceptance of group support is apparent (8.4). The children had apparently incorporated information about death from the group meeting and, presumably, from other sources as was demonstrated by their realistic portrayal of a dead person, burial scenes, and thoughts about what happens to a body after death. This seems to support the psychoanalytic

position in the review of literature that children can comprehend death as a cessation of biological functioning (Ch. II). The cause of death was also actively explored (15.1).

There were several unexpected aspects of the nature of the childrens' play. It was interesting to note the separation of the children into two groups divided primarily along sex lines. The girls seemed to achieve mastery of the event by directly involving themselves as dead persons in a hospital setting utilizing the causative facts of Rosemary's death. The boys, however, displaced their exploration onto objects with little reference to the cause of Rosemary's death. Death was seen as the result of an act of violence that they directed by manipulating the objects involved thereby achieving a distance, control, and mastery of the event. This observation on the nature of the boys' play supports Portz's (1964) research in which he found that preschool-aged boys were quite absorbed with violence as a cause of death. He suggests that the amount of aggression expressed may be in direct relation to the length of time it would take a boy to develop a realistic concept of death. Portz did not include girls in his study and the research presently available does not account for the different modes of exploration of death by sex that was apparent in this class situation. One may tentatively propose a

culturally determined sex-role basis for this difference. Another factor, which may have necessitated a more direct and personal exploration of the subject by the girls, may be due to the overpowering nature of self-reference due to the girls' identification with a female classmate's death.

Another interesting observation was that there was no apparent grief or sadness expressed this first day. Children seemed compelled to understand the event through their dramatizations of death but defended against affective states. Behaviors associated with mourning became more apparent in the following days. For example, all of the children displayed anxiety about the safety of the school. One girl brought a band aid to class stating, "In case I get hurt." Another child said: "Someone is shaking the school down, the school would get dead and we would get dead."

Many children reacted strongly to short separations from the teachers and, at times, expressed anger at the teacher; they also became quite group oriented. Regression, however, was especially vivid among the three girls where thumb sucking, baby talk, distracted play, fear of being alone, and fear of separating from parents became quite apparent. This suggests that the self-reference involved in their personal portrayal of death may have overwhelmed their affective capacities. This would confirm Rochlin's

(1967) and Maurer's (1966) hypotheses that self-reference plays a central position in a child's reaction to death and may point to the need to develop Learning Opportunities that would help children to maintain appropriate defenses while slowly integrating the emotional and cognitive aspects of this occurrence.

The reader may find it interesting to compare the material revealed through this initial group meeting with the emotional and conceptual awareness of death expressed by the children in the planned group meeting at the end of the school year (Appendix II).

Planned Emergent Learning Opportunity

Planned Emergent Learning Opportunities, as defined in this pilot study, consist of an awareness of underlying Generalizations and Objectives and planning the equipment and strategies necessary for the classroom so that, when appropriate for an individual child, they can make use of the equipment to facilitate the resolution of their affective and cognitive concerns about death. The materials are always available. The child's natural sequencing process determines when and how the child will make use of it and the teacher is prepared to facilitate the resolution of the varied issues the materials may evoke. Examples of Planned Emergent Curriculum were the placement of hospital equipment in the class and keeping a scrapbook the children

had made of pictures of activities involving all the children on the book shelf. The following are three examples of this form of intervention.

Situation II

A class member, Lawrence, had moved the week previous to Rosemary's death and consequently was no longer in the school program. This had been discussed at the time with no apparent anxiety. Curiosity was expressed about where he was moving and a visit by Lawrence had been planned. There was also a goodbye party.

Objectives

1.4 To apply information about death to relevant situations.

2.11 To develop a concept of separation.

6.3 To differentiate between death and separation (cognitive).

6.5 To list characteristics of a separation experience (as a person exists but has moved away) as opposed to a death.

10.2 To acknowledge and question the permanence of death.

10.1 To question and explore the reality of permanent loss.

6.4 To differentiate between temporary and permanent loss due to circumstances as opposed to loss due to death.

Planned Emergent Learning Opportunities

1) Taking class attendance after the children arrived at school was a ritualized daily procedure. A photograph of each child was hung on a nail over their name which was on a large board. Both Lawrence's and Rosemary's name and picture remained on the board.

Random Responses at Different Points in the School Year.

"Rosemary's not here because she's dead."
"I'm going to take the wire off [from the picture]--she's dead. She can't play anymore."
"Rosemary's dead . . . Lawrence is at another school."
"Her hair must be getting long now."
"Somebody's photo is not here . . . Rosemary's . . . she's dead . . . under the sidewalk like this."
[Smashes the wall of blocks he had built.]

2) Cubbies were used for coats, toys, etc. Both Lawrence's and Rosemary's cubbie were kept alongside most of their classmates.

Random Responses at Different Points in the School Year.

[Goes to mother after taking off coat and hanging it] "That's Lawrence's hook, he can't use it anymore." [Passes Rosemary's cubbie] "That's Rosemary's, she's dead, right, ma?"

[Child sees a boy painting Rosemary's cubbie] "She's dead." [The child then gets the teacher to read the book called The Dead Bird over and over while sitting and touching the teacher.]

3) Each child has a cup with his/her name that was hung on a hook above the sink also labeled with their names; Lawrence's and Rosemary's cups were kept on their hooks.

Random Response.

"The cup [referring to Rosemary's] has to be thrown out . . . it can't be used anymore." Later that day, the child looked at Rosemary's photograph and said: "She's dead."

Discussion

The children used the presence of the two children's possessions as a means to acknowledge and clarify Rosemary's death and, at times, to further develop their concept of the

event (10.1; 10.2). Differentiation between Rosemary's death and Lawrence's separation on both a cognitive and affective level was apparent (6.3; 6.4). At times, this was evident by verbally accounting for the difference (6.5). There was also noticeably less discussion, conceptual confusion, and affect involved with Lawrence's separation whereas there were constant comments and, in some instances, confusion, in reference to Rosemary. This difference in the childrens' response would seem to indicate that Lawrence's separation did not evoke the confusion and/or anxiety that was associated with Rosemary's death and, therefore, required less emotional and cognitive exploration of the event. Differentiation in relation to affective responses was also apparent in the anger expressed by some children when addressing the death as when a child knocked down blocks while acknowledging Rosemary's death. Other children expressed their anxiety and feelings about death by seeking out closeness with a teacher as when a child stated: "She's dead" and immediately sought out a teacher to both reinforce death-related concepts through the book she chose to have read to her and through her need for physical closeness with a trusted adult.

The responses of the children tend to confirm Rochlin's (1965) and Maurer's (1966) hypothesis that children are acutely aware of death as a phenomenon separate from

separation. It apparently also confirms Alexander's and Alderstein's (1959) findings in which young children exhibited a much higher anxiety reaction to death-related words than to any other words. At the same time, the responses of the children seem to contradict Kastenbaum's (1967) and Steiner's (1965) position that the two phenomena are not differentiated by young children due to their limited cognitive abilities.

Aside from providing examples of Planned Emergent Learning Opportunities on this subject, the inclusion of these particular Learning Opportunities based on Lawrence's separation and Rosemary's death were chosen to illustrate how curriculum can be planned to take advantage of the particular circumstances of a classroom situation to facilitate the actualization of Objectives. The author feels that leaving specific possessions of Lawrence and Rosemary in the classroom implicitly permitted and encouraged discussion and exploration of death and separation and was, therefore, an effective curriculum strategy.

Emergent Learning Opportunity

An Emergent Learning Opportunity takes place where there is an unplanned and unanticipated death-related statement or behavior by a child or group. It usually arises from a child's inner emotional and/or cognitive

processes and spontaneously emerges or is evoked by a situation in the class. Due to the personal meaning of these reactions and their unexpected timing they are often the most difficult for a teacher to respond to. One must quickly integrate one's assessment of the personal meaning of the child's response in relation to his/her overall adjustment to the death emotionally and conceptually and be able to utilize the materials in Chapters II and III to draw on the appropriate information to formulate Objectives and Learning Opportunities. There is often a measure of choice in terms of how one decides to respond to a situation. For example, one may address a remark by providing clarifying conceptual information or help a child to do this by providing leading questions, or by identifying an affective state to help a child understand the derivation of his/her feelings and behaviors.

Situation III

At "juice time" a child remarked: "If I drink coke will I die like Rosemary?"

This question could be derived from several concerns: Will I die?; What causes death?; If I defy my mother, will I die?; etc. One could choose to address any of these issues by selecting an intervention that would help the child to identify his own fears, offer assurance, provide

cognitive information about Rosemary's death or death in general, or by providing opportunities for the child to explore "causality" in relation to death. This particular child had been overheard on previous occasions talking about poison and candy as causing disappearance and death, especially since his brother had gone to a dentist and had been admonished about eating candy. The teacher therefore chose the following Objectives.

Objectives

5.3 To identify causes of death in people.

13.2 To explore one's fears provoked by a death or death-related occurrence.

Emergent Learning Opportunities

1) A quiet talk with the child about his concerns and fears about his own death as evoked by Rosemary's.
2) Discussion about the causes of death including the two other children at the table.

Situation IV

A child remarked: "The door is dead." This was followed by nervous high-pitched laughter. He had, on a previous day, said: "The table is dead." This is the same child who said "I'm dead" in the initial discussion about Rosemary's death.

Objectives

6.2 To ask for, or let oneself accept, the reassurance of continuity, stability, and closeness of supportive people and a supportive environment.

3.1 To differentiate among live, dead, and inanimate objects.

Emergent Learning Opportunities

1) Teacher put her arm around the boy and calmly rubbed his back.

2) Provide opportunities in the ensuing days for the child to identify and differentiate between animate (and therefore death-prone) objects and inanimate objects.

Situation V: Group Emergent Situation

At about the same time after Rosemary's death, the theme of Batman and Superman was developed by three of the boys. This was accompanied by an increase in aggression and dramatic play involving killing and violence. Two of the girls talked consistently about their father's strength, intelligence, and powers of protectiveness.

1) "Pretend we are good Supermen and we only poison bad people." This was followed by aggressive play with two boys.

2) "I'm Batman, I'm gonna shoot you out--dead and gone forever." [To a psychiatrist nearby Robin voluntarily related a dream: "I was chased and became Superman so I couldn't be killed.]

Discussion

In discussing mourning, Grollman (1967) found that one reaction to mourning was to defend against one's thoughts and feelings about death by a defense of omnipotence and aggression. Given this information and Rochlin's (1967) hypothesis of self-reference as a major factor in a child's reaction to death, Robin's dream vividly reflects these suppositions (one will not be killed if one can be omnipotent) and provides interpretation of the Batman-Superman play by the boys and "omnipotent father" play exhibited by the girls.

Objectives

9.2 To experience protest and/or aggression in relation to the death when felt.

8.2 To master one's fear that the death has not happened and will not necessarily happen immediately.

16.3 To understand what one is feeling.

Learning Opportunities

1) Dramatic play, as described, was viewed as an organic stage of exploration of death and mourning. Facilitation by staff members was minimal when it was felt that the child had the resources necessary to cope with his/her anxiety and aggression.
2) When necessary, a child was helped to accept his/her anxiety or aggressive feelings by either labeling them, exploring their derivation, or offering physical or verbal support.

Discussion

Emergent Learning Opportunities, as exemplified here, present unique problems for the teacher in identifying and addressing the underlying and/or more apparent issues which spontaneously arise. There are often several alternatives in relation to the level one chooses to address a comment or activity as illustrated in Situation I. It must be kept in mind that a child will usually pursue his/her concerns until they are resolved and that this will often take place over a considerable amount of time due to the complex nature of the subject.

The last example of an Emergent Learning Opportunity was particularly interesting to this author. As in the division of play groups by sex lines after the initial discussion on death (Situation I), here again there is

a resolution of an apparently similar issue explored differently along sex lines. Whereas the boys chose Batman and Superman as their omnipotent figures, the girls chose their fathers. Again, there is no explanation which accounts for this difference in the research presently available.

Summary

It is apparent from the examples of curriculum provided by the pilot study that Learning Opportunities based on death and the facilitation of mourning in young children can be created and applied to a real classroom situation. The process of evaluation of the effectiveness of the interventions has been demonstrated through a review of several of the activities presented. Although it has not been a primary focus of this study, a review of some of the findings based on responses of the children to the Learning Opportunities has been included. The observations from these Learning Opportunities and activities not included in this study seem to validate some aspects of the material provided in the review of literature. For example, children were often able to differentiate between separation and death, aspects of a concept of death were apparent, and aspects of mourning behavior (regression, denial, and anger) were also evidenced. Some reactions of the children seemed

to contradict research reviewed, as in the observation that the children did not express overt sadness about Rosemary's death. There were also behaviors which were not accounted for in the literature as in the different mode of resolution of similar conflicts by sex lines on some issues. Formal evaluation of the findings of this study, however, are limited due to the nature of a study based on few children and the absence of formal measurements and a control group.

The author feels that the pilot study confirmed the need for the three forms of Learning Opportunities created. All three forms were responded to by all the children with each child apparently using the information and interventions according to his/her own needs. This finding reinforced the premise that the subject of death and mourning involves an interrelationship of cognitive and affective development that must be individually sequenced by each child. Curriculum on this subject must therefore provide as many avenues and means of exploration as possible so that each child can relate to and resolve the many issues it raises.

C H A P T E R V

CONCLUSION

Death and mourning have been taboo subjects in our society. This is especially evident in relation to addressing young children's concerns in this area. The purpose of this study has been to demonstrate that it is possible to create a model curriculum on the development of a child's concept of death and ability to mourn. The curriculum is designed to build the intellectual and emotional skills necessary for the child to resolve his/her general questions and personal issues raised by this subject and to directly address the conflicts and concerns presented by mourning. A second purpose of this dissertation has been to illustrate the viability of the curriculum by applying it in a preschool program as reported in a pilot study.

Chapter III demonstrates that it is possible to create a curriculum on this subject. As we have seen, Objectives could be created to facilitate the child's cognitive and emotional understanding of death and ability to cope with mourning. The rationale establishing the process of curriculum design was also validated in that the process of curriculum formulation proved to be applicable for the creation of Learning Opportunities. Two hypothetical death-related classroom situations were created to demonstrate

this process. Generalizations derived from sources in Chapter II were used to generate Inferences and Objectives relevant to these situations. It was found that Learning Opportunities could be created to actualize these Objectives in a preschool program.

The pilot study reported in Chapter IV lends further support to the validity of this curriculum. As we have seen, it was feasible to utilize the model curriculum as a basis for responding to a real classroom situation in which a four-year-old class member died of pneumonia. The pilot study demonstrated that it is possible to create Learning Opportunities for a preschool program on the development of a concept of death and ability to mourn derived largely from the Objectives formulated in Chapter III. Observation of children's responses to the Learning Opportunities reported in Chapter IV, and to those interventions not reported in this study, show that the activities created did address issues and concerns that death and mourning raise. Further indication that the curriculum was effective is that children's ideas about death and their ability to relate to death were found to have developed considerably. This is especially apparent if one compares the responses of the children in the first Planned Emergent discussion (Situation I) on Rosemary's death and the final discussion held at the end of the school year (Appendix II). Indications of this

development are that by the end of the year most children saw death as permanent, the cause of Rosemary's death was accepted, further causes of death were explored, and children were able to differentiate between animate and inanimate objects. The reality of what happens to a body after death (burial) was generally acknowledged. It can be inferred from the decrease in separation anxiety and the children's ability to differentiate between Lawrence's separation and Rosemary's death, that separation and death, in this situation, were recognized as two different phenomena. After several months, children viewed death as reversible only when relating it to themselves. This author concurs with Rochlin (1965) in viewing this reaction as a defense called upon when the child has been able to relate the experience to him/herself. This implies that children are capable of acknowledging death in personal terms. Also, as seen in the last discussion, it was clear that children had developed their own views and feelings about death as opposed to repeating those of their adult models as evidenced in the first group meeting. There was less avoidance of the subject, less anxiety when death was discussed, and an increased ability to tolerate questions on death in relation to themselves and Rosemary. Children were seen to be eager to explore their thoughts and feelings about death. These accomplishments were major goals of the

curriculum and pilot study and imply the viability and necessity of addressing children's understanding of death through curricula designed on this subject.

Observations of mourning behaviors and their resolution is evidence that Learning Opportunities were able to address this occurrence. Indications of mourning, as seen in the pilot study, include children's initial denial and anger at the occurrence, an increase in concern for their safety in the school, and fear of separation from both their parents and teachers. Regressive behaviors were observed especially by the female class members. It is interesting to note that grief or overt sadness was not observed. Kliman (1964) reports that children cannot tolerate sadness and that they therefore need an adult model to set an example for grieving. The apparent lack of overt grief raises two questions for further research. First, can children of this age tolerate sadness over a death of a classmate? Second, would an adult model have been able to facilitate this phase of mourning. The Teacher-Director in the classroom reported in the pilot study did not express sadness overtly. If Kliman's findings are confirmed, it would strongly support the need for the Teacher Training Program proposed in Chapter III. Another possible explanation for the lack of sadness observed in the children may be that the dead child was not a loved classmate. In that case, grief would not be an appropriate affect.

The division of the class into two cohesive subgroups of considerable longevity is another observation unaccounted for in the sources reviewed in Chapter II. Other than the comfort derived from group support, this author cannot offer an explanation for this occurrence or the reasons why particular children were drawn to each other. Further research is suggested by this author to explore whether this is a common dynamic in a classroom under these circumstances and, if so, what purpose does it serve for the children and what Learning Opportunities are indicated to facilitate the actualization of this purpose if, indeed, it is found to benefit the children?

As we have seen in the pilot study, the mode of resolution of apparently similar issues was found to be sex determined. This implies that the formulation of Learning Opportunities on death and mourning should take into account the child's sex in relation to how one resolves certain concerns and provide a variety of activities to allow for these differences. Questions raised for further research are: 1) does the sex of the child who died determine how children relate to death and mourning, and 2) is the sex difference in mode of resolution determined by the particular situation in which it was observed? On a broader level, research is called for to investigate if there is a significant difference in mourning behaviors between boys

and girls and, if so, what does this imply in relation to our theoretical understanding of mourning and, more specifically, in terms of curriculum development.

Throughout the pilot study unaccounted for observations not found in the literature have been reported. Further research in these areas could supply information that would enhance our understanding of children's reactions to death and mourning and thereby provide more accurate resources from which to derive relevant Learning Opportunities.

The broad definition of curriculum proposed in Chapter III in which the total process of curriculum development is defined under the term "curriculum" is supported by observation of the pilot study. It was seen that the curriculum proved to be applicable in the emergent situation reported because the resource material and process of developing activities was made available. Relevant Objectives were selected from Chapter III while others were created from information provided in the review of literature so that Learning Opportunities suited to particular situations could be created. The finding that it is feasible to apply this curriculum on death and mourning to a preschool program strongly suggests that educators can use this facility to address this subject in their own programs.

This study is the first reported attempt to create a curriculum on the development of a child's concept of death

and ability to mourn for preschool-aged children. It is also, to this author's knowledge, the first attempt to apply a curriculum on this subject in a preschool classroom. The fact that it was applied and that findings have been reported which seem to indicate that children have benefited from the Learning Opportunities provided, implies the need for further research that would conclusively demonstrate the validity of this curriculum. Further study of the design of the curriculum and the observations reported is indicated. This author suggests that research is called for that would include a control group, a larger and more representative population of children, and experimental measures to evaluate what children have learned. A longitudinal study would be useful to explore the short- and long-term effects of exposure of young children to this subject in terms of the development of their understanding of death, the cognitive and emotional skills to mourn, and their ability to address and cope with other stressful situations. A study is also warranted to examine the effects of working with the child's parents on this subject in relation to their capacity to confront stressful issues and in their ability to support their child's efforts to do so.

A case study approach on the development of a child's concept of death and ability to mourn is indicated. The

reaction to Rosemary's death and the concerns raised by the children in the pilot study were, at times, quite individual. It may be that the concerns reflected by the questions asked and the particular time in the school year that they were raised may reflect developmental tasks the child was involved with at the time of the death, or they may be derived from on-going family issues. Further research is suggested to explore the effect of taking these factors into consideration. For example, what is the effect on a child in relating to a death if s/he is emotionally occupied with abandonment issues due to a divorce? Such findings could enhance the usefulness of the curriculum in meeting the needs of each child.

As we have seen through this study, it is possible to create a curriculum on a life-crisis such as death and mourning. This implies that educators can develop curricula on other previously avoided subjects for preschool programs such as divorce, remarriage, and the homosexuality of parents.

This author strongly suggests that a training program for educators is called for that would include exposure of teachers to: 1) the broad range of life crises and developmental tasks of early childhood and the means to facilitate the resolution of conflicts they present and, 2) the means to create curricula to address these areas in their own

classrooms. Research would be necessary to: 1) explore the effectiveness of the training program; 2) investigate whether teachers will utilize this training and create curricula on these subjects for their classrooms; and 3) explore the effect on children of having these subjects addressed.

In summary, it is hoped that having seen that it is possible to create and apply a curriculum on this subject, educators will see the feasibility and necessity to take responsibility to develop curricula in other fields with a view to preventive mental health for young children.

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APPENDIX I

PHONE CONVERSATION TO PARENTS EXPLAINING THE OCCURRENCE OF ROSEMARY'S DEATH

Planned Learning Opportunity

"I have something very sad to tell you. Rosemary has died."

[Parent reaction]--shock, grief, fear. Common second response: What can I do?

Teacher gives information surrounding circumstances of the death and funeral arrangements.

"I am calling each parent because I feel it is important for you to be the first one to share this important information with your child. This will be an issue which you and your child will be dealing with over a long period of time and it is important for you and your child to feel open about sharing your feelings and thoughts.

"Also, I will be discussing it with the children in class the next day and wanted you and your child to have a chance to share your feelings about the death before we talked about it in school.

"Telling your child about the death may seem difficult and may feel easier if you use whatever words feel the most comfortable. I suggest that you first think about how you

feel and share your reactions with your child. The children are bound to be confused for awhile and their reactions may be very different from your own. Often children do not show sadness or initially respond to this sort of situation."

Plans were made for an evening parent meeting for two days following the call. The agenda was explained to include a sharing of experiences, information about children's reactions to death, and shared concerns.

APPENDIX II

OPEN-ENDED DISCUSSION BY THE CHILDREN ON THEIR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS ABOUT DEATH AT THE END OF THE SCHOOL YEAR

Planned Emergent Learning Opportunity

May 29, one week before the end of the school program, Dr. Hauptman, the Consulting Psychiatrist, joined the class during their "juice time." His plan was to evoke a discussion that would elicit the children's conceptual and emotional understanding of death.

Situation

Children are having their juice while sitting around a table. Dr. Hauptman enters and is greeted by the children. Soon after his arrival a bee flies into the room. The children watch and are both anxious and curious about the bee's presence. A child's mother has been hospitalized the day before. There is talk of her going to the hospital in an ambulance (the children will be identified by their first initial).

S. "A man died . . . he's in the ground."

R. "When someone dies they're put in the ground."

S. "If I got runned over, hospital men would get me."

Dr. H. calls attention to the bee.

Dr. H. "What will happen when it is old?"

D. "The bee could go into the nest and be covered in the snow."

Dr. H. "What would happen to him there?"

D. "He'll die."

Dr. H. "What happens when something dies?"

Children. "He's dead." "It's sad."

D. "I'm sad my mommy died."

H. "My mommy had stitches. She had to get fixed in the hospital. Grammy was in the hospital."

Dr. H. "Your mommy isn't dead. She's in the hospital." [to D.]: "What happens when you go in the hospital?"

H. "Get sick."

Class moves over to the group meeting area.

Dr. H. "What happens to the dead bee?" [Holds up a block to represent the bee.]

S. [Makes noise and aggressively puts something in Bruce's pocket.]

N. "Kill him [aggressively hits the "bee" block].

Dr. H. "Can you make it alive again?"

N. "No, it's dead forever [looks down, quiet]. [Children, watch Dr. H. make a 'grave' out of blocks for the 'bee.']

Dr. H. "What happens when the bee is dead?"

N. "It's dead." [Puts "bee" block in "grave." H., S., and B. leave the immediate area. N. then destroys the block configuration.]

S. [Puts a doll on Dr. H. and takes the "Andy" doll and has it climb to the top of a shelf and then drops the doll.] "It's in the hospital--jumped off bed and fell."

Dr. H. "What happens in the hospital?"

N. [Makes an "ambulance."]

Dr. H. [Holds up girl doll.] "This doll is sick."

S. [Lines up people in the "hospital"--a vaguely defined area within the circle the children have formed.]

N. [Socks the girl doll.] "She's in the hospital. She is dead." [Hits Dr. H.]

S. "No, she's up in heaven."

H. "Oh, Rosemary, she died of a cold."

N. "From a very bad cold."

H. [Playing with boxes that fit into one another. She is opening one box and taking out the rest. In the smallest she puts a toy cat. She then lies down in fetal position.] "She died." [Then sits up.]

S. "Cause if you really die, you're sick." [Takes the girl doll.] "Take her some place. To the fire station."

H. [Has the little cat in the smallest box and is covering it up with larger boxes.] "This little cat is dead again and she's going back in the trash can barrel. She gets buried in her house. She can't come out . . . she's dead 'cause you can't get up. She felled down. That's when you really fall down and dead."

Dr. H. "But when you and I fall down we get up."

N. [Piling up pillows and falling down from them.]

H. "You can't get up if you're dead."

N. "I fell down."

Dr. H. "When you fall down you get up again."

N. "I can never get up." [Keeps falling and getting up.]

S. [Continuing "hospital" play.] "This man is dead--in the hospital. He died." [Shows to Dr. H.] "Help! Help!" [Male doll falls from the blocks.]

A. "He got killed."

S. [Has the doll fall again and then goes to Dr. H. and hangs on his back.]

Dr. H. [Referring to male doll.] "Take him to the hospital."

A. "He's alive now."

The children are gravitating to Dr. H. as he sits on the carpet.. They are playing closer and closer to him. All

of the children seem to be aware of the conversations and seem to be playing out their understanding of the theme. Two children are close to Dr. H. but are engrossed in a peg board game. H.'s cat "keeps getting dead" and then she retrieves it.

R. "She's dead." [Referring to doll he's playing with. Puts doll on car and carries her away.]

A. "And this little boy is buried in the rocks." [Man lying face up. A. is holding blocks all around him and then covers the man over with blocks.]

H. [Uncovers cat in box.] "She's alive now . . . and she's hungry."

A. [Has girl doll crash grave he has built and appears to be delighted to see the male doll revealed.] "Girl got him out!" [Scrambles up the "grave."] "This man [doll that was buried] can't come here because he might be burned." [Flies man in the air.] "I'm going away."

The group disperses slowly.